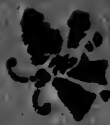




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BY

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. IN THE YEAR 724 - - -	1
II. A CHRISTIAN AMONG THE HEATHEN - -	37
III. AT THE SORBE VILLAGE - - -	66
IV. THE RETURN HOME - - -	118
V. THE ASSEMBLAGE-IN THE FOREST - -	153
VI. WALBURG - - -	188
VII. UNDER THE SHADE - - -	220
VIII. UNDER THE BELL - - -	258
IX. THE JOURNEY HOME - - -	283



INGRABAN.

I.

IN THE YEAR 724.

THREE horsemen were riding silently, on a hot summer day, along the forest road which led northwards from the Main to the hilly country of Franconia and Thuringia. The first was the guide, a young man of powerful limbs ; his long hair hung wildly round his head, and his blue eyes were in ceaseless motion, spying about on both sides of the road into the forest. He wore a faded leather cap, and a large pocket with travelling provisions over his brown jacket ; he had in his hand a javelin, on his back a bow and quiver, by his side a long deer knife, and on the saddle of his horse a heavy forest axe. Some steps behind him rode a broad-shouldered man, of riper years, with a large head ; his powerful brow and sparkling eyes gave him the appearance of a warrior, but he did not bear himself like

a man of the sword; a Saxon straw hat covered his short-cut hair, there was no shoulder-belt over his long dress, and no weapon visible,—only the axe, which every traveller carried in the wilderness, was fixed to his saddle; from the large leather bag which was fastened before him, one might perhaps have taken him for a trader. By his side trotted a youth in light dress and equipment, who bore a bundle on his back and in his hand the branch of a tree, with which he sometimes urged on his little horse. It was clear by the demeanour of the guide that he did not consider the travellers as important people, for he raised his head haughtily when giving short answers to any question of the older man, and he only looked back sulkily sometimes, when the road was steep or the two remained far behind, turning his eyes quickly away, as from ill-conditioned fellows. The rough path passed through sand, over blocks of stone and undulating ground, and betwixt old pine stems; on the brown ground there grew little else but wolf's milk, heather, and dark wood berries. All was still in the forest,—only the crows screamed over the trees; the hot air was filled with the smell of resin, and no breath of wind cooled the heated cheek. When there was a steep ascent in the

path, the youth sprang forward, plucked from the pathway a bunch of berries, and offered it to the horseman. The latter thanked him with a friendly look, and began in the Latin language: "Dost thou see an end to the forest? Our horses are weary and the sun is setting."

"Stem behind stem, my father, and not a ray of light before us in the wood."

"Thou art not accustomed to rough paths, Gottfried," continued the older man compassionately; "unwillingly did I bring thee into this wild country, and I regret that I yielded to thy petition."

"But I am happy, my father," replied the youth, with a glad smile, "that I may accompany thee as thy unworthy servant."

"Youth always rejoices in wandering," said the horseman. "Look at our guide, he cares little for the heat of the day; he is of a powerful wild stock, that waits for the graft."

"He does not treat us in a friendly way, my father."

"Though he is cross, why should he not be honourable? He has sworn upon his hand to Frau Hildegard and me, to lead us securely over the mountains, and he does not look like a robber. Yet if he were, there is One stronger than him

in the wilderness." He bowed his head as he spoke. "Observe, he has found something which disturbs his journey."

The demeanour of the guide had changed; he sat erect on his saddle with raised spear, as if ready for an onset.

The stranger rode up to him: "Thy name is Ingram, I believe."

"I am Ingraban, the Thuringian," replied the horseman proudly, assenting to the words of the other; "and this is the Raven, my horse;" he touched the neck of the noble animal, which was black like his feathered namesake, and the horse raised his head neighing under the hand of the rider.

"I perceive that the travelling paths are well known to thee, although far from thy home."

"I have often ridden as the messenger of my countrymen to the Franks over the Main."

"And Frau Hildegard also, the Count's widow, has long been friendly to thee."

"I fought in the troop of her husband, when the Wends slew him. Hildegard is a good lady, she nursed my sick servant."

"I found thee by the bed of the sick man, and I am glad to have obtained such a safe guide. What stops thy way now?"

The hand of the guide pointed to a track in the sand.

"A herd of wild horses have passed here," said the stranger, looking at the track.

"They were horsemen, more than three, and their greeting would be hostile if they met us," answered the guide.

"How dost thou know that they are enemies?"

"Does a wanderer in thy country hope for an honest greeting in the wilderness?" retorted the guide; "those who have been here were warriors, who speak a foreign tongue, of the Wends by the Saale, which we call the Sorbe; they roam far on horseback after hunting booty and herds of cattle. There lies their sign;" he touched with his spear a short reed arrow with a stone point. "They have crossed our way since the last rain."

"And dost thou hope to lead us across the mountains concealed from the strangers?"

"If you have the courage, I have the will. I know many passes by which we can avoid their bands; yet I advise you to keep silent and near to my horse."

The strangers rode cautiously close behind the guide.

The border path descended in to a quiet forest

valley, then through swampy ground and the bed of a stream, and ascended on the other side again into the forest. They went along between high beech stems, pleasantly on the green mossy ground which was gilded by the slanting sunbeams. And again the path descended into a wide valley. On the border of the forest the guide stopped. "This is Idisthal," he said, bending his head as a greeting; "and there runs the Idisbach to the Main." He led through high meadow grass to a ford over the stream; from thence they trotted along a range of hills northwards. Lonely and uninhabited lay the blooming valley. Sometimes the horsemen passed over old arable land; the beet furrows were visible, but the blackthorn and the prickly broom stood upon it thick as a hedge, and the horses had difficulty in penetrating through it. The stranger looked with sympathy on the devastated cultivation. "Industrious hands have once worked here," he said lamentingly.

"Since the memory of man the place has laid waste," answered the leader with indifference. "Farther above,"—he pointed to some elevated ground,—"there once stood a house, but the Wends burnt it when I was a boy. Wild herbs have been growing on the height for the last

twenty summers. If thou carest for ruined houses, thou mayest find many here. Over the stream the Avares encamped a long time ago, men with brown skins and squinting eyes; they wear, as the old people relate, plaited pigtailed round the head, and are a mighty Eastern people, but horrible incendiaries. Over there stood, as tradition says, a large number of houses by a sacred forest of those trees that we call maple; the Avares burnt them down, now only a few of the old stems are standing, and where the houses were, there is now desolation. But that is long ago. It would be difficult to count the years' growth of the pine trees which tower over it. Wherever thou seest thorns and burdocks, there once stood a building: many have been destroyed in the time of our fathers, many in the remembrance of living persons, and some in these last years; there remain now only a few here and there."

As the stranger was silent, the guide pointed up to the sky, over which the evening red was spreading itself, and rode out of the valley path up a small steep track. The travellers' horses climbed laboriously through a thick wood up to a mountain height. The summit was an uneven space without trees, overgrown with low copse

wood and wild flowers. Only a mighty ash-tree rose in the middle out of the low herbage. The horsemen looked from three sides far over the hills: to the southward over the Main, to the north over the blue mountains of Thuringia, and straight on into a wide level valley, which was surrounded by high undulating hills. Behind them stretched a mountain declivity, separated from the foremost summit by mounds of earth and hollows, which looked like an old rampart and trench. The guide sprang from his horse, and bowed himself low towards the ash-tree, then he went to the edge of the summit and looked searchingly into the valley, and then along the border of the forests. Again he turned to the ash, and said reverently: "Here is the Idisburgh, and this is the holy tree of the Weird Sisters. The place is a protection from hurtful powers, and therefore I have brought you here."

"Thou hast shown thyself an experienced guide," replied the stranger, surveying the good place of encampment. He descended and loosened himself the leather bag from the saddle of the horse. "Undoubtedly thou knowest also a spring in the neighbourhood." The guide seized the bridle of the horse: "Order thy boy to carry the flasks, and help me to level the hedge," he said,

leading the animals about a hundred steps down the declivity, where a spring ran into the valley out of a moss-covered stone. There he fastened the horses that they might feed, raised his heavy axe, and motioned to the youth to follow him into the forest.

When the stranger found himself alone on the summit, he walked round the space in which the ash-tree stood, praying with bowed head. Then he proceeded to examine carefully the spot, as a man who knew how to distinguish the signs of nature, and pushed with his foot under one of the knotty roots of the tree which towered high above the ground; he found loose earth, struck into it with the steel of his axe, and raised with great exertion a stone out of it, over which the roots had grown. Their shoots had penetrated into a hole in the stone and had burst it. The man looked with admiration at the regularity with which the hole was bored; then he took the leather bag reverently and pushed it into the place of the stone, and a smile played over his face. "If a fiend dwells in this tree, this hidden treasure will occasion him danger." Once more he scrutinized the uneven ground round about and the luxuriant green which had shot out of it, then he took out of the pocket of his dress a

little book, seated himself so that the evening light fell upon it, opened the clasp, and read the parchment. He heard the noise of woodcutting, and observed that the guide was preparing to erect the night fence farther down. "Hither, Ingram," cried out the stranger, in a tone of command. The guide shook his head and went on striking. The stranger approached nearer, and ordered him: "Carry the stakes up here, we will rest by the tree."

"That will never do," replied the guide.

"And why not, if I choose it?"

"Shall the light of the fire on the height announce thy resting-place to foreign spies?"

"The night is warm, I will gladly do without fire; a warrior like thee also can manage without a cooking-hearth."

Ingram stood motionless, and looked gloomily at the stranger.

"Whoever thou mayest be," continued the latter, "for this journey thou hast sworn thyself to me for good pay, and I am the master of our movements. If thou wilt not do according to my will, go thy way, I will seek my path without thee."

"Unwillingly do I serve thee," answered the guide, angrily, "and only because one who has

done me good has hired me ; and if I were free from my word and thou knewest how to use a sword, I would rather be thy enemy than thy friend, know that, stranger. But I have nothing to fear from that tree, only thou, for it is well known in the country, and around it float, from primeval times, high powers, which are thy enemies and not mine."

"Whether they are my enemies I will show thee, if thou wilt follow me," answered the stranger, stepping up to the tree. He raised his axe and cried out : "If they are wrathful, let them be angry ; if they have power, let them strike me as I do this stem." With a powerful blow he struck his axe into the tree. The guide stepped back, seized his weapon, and looked fixedly up on high, to see whether or no a token from the Gods would strike the impious man ; but all remained still, only a dry branch with some ash seed fell down. "See here," cried the stranger, pointing to the little bundle of seeds, "that is the anger of thy powerful ones. The tree before which thou tremblest was once a little fluttering grain of seed like these ; it has grown out of a contemptible little kernel. Where did the powers whom thou fearest dwell, when the tree was still a grain of seed ? Dost thou think that the tree

has stood from the beginning of man's earth? Observe, I found this stone under its roots, cracked and burst through by the strength of the tree. Examine the stone, it is a mill-stone, such as the women turn in order to grind the corn. Before the ash-tree existed, a house of living men has stood here. Little honour do the Gods deserve who only became powerful in the ash-tree, when the men were dead who dwelt here before the tree. But the Lord, whom I serve, is the God who made heaven and earth; He alone is eternal and all-powerful from the primeval times, and will be eternal and all-powerful when the last splinter of this tree will have vanished out of the world."

The guide bent down to the broken stone, and looked into the opening at the piece of root, and on the remains of the charcoal which adhered to the sandstone. His hair hung over his face, and his breast heaved with heavy respiration. "If a house stood here it has been burnt," he said at last in a low voice to himself. "When I was little, they told me that my ancestors were settled on the mountain. Old people knew a song about it: a Minstrel who was slain by the Wends was acquainted with this song."

The stranger touched him on the shoulder.

"Night is drawing on, and the wolves howl in the forest ; fetch the stakes, Ingram."

The guide rose. "Hither have I led thee," he said bitterly, "that I might keep my oath to thee, and that thou mightest be secure near a high goddess whom I know to be favourable to me. But thou hast disturbed her peace by thy acts, and thou disturbest me with heavy thoughts which thou hast put into my heart. If thou hast the power to know the past, and to endure without the protection of the super-terrestrial, thou mayest prepare thyself for thy night's rest where thou canst; I do not help thee."

The stranger seized silently one of the stakes, which the youth meanwhile had brought up, and raised the mallet. Powerfully fell the strokes on the heads of the stakes; Gottfried begged for the fire-wood, and twined the branches between the stakes, till a fence was constructed around the stem of the tree, which made a narrow enclosure for the horses and men. Gottfried led the horses of both the travellers within the fence, and the stranger, when all was accomplished, stepped up to the guide, and said kindly: "There is room also for thee and thy animal in our place of safety."

"I and my horse do not desire thy protection," answered Ingram, turning aside. He raised the millstone from its place, and carried it to the edge of the summit, far from the stranger, then sprang down to the spring and loosened the tetherings of his horse, and led it to the stone,—there he lay down near his beast, and pushed the stone under his head.

Within the enclosure Gottfried bound together in the shape of a cross two wooden sticks: he kissed it, and gave it reverentially to the stranger, who stuck it into the root of the tree which held his treasure. Both knelt down, and raised their voices in the Latin evening song; the elder sang with a powerful voice, and the youth responded. The melodious tones echoed back from the near mountain wall, and struggled with the wild voices of the night, which sounded shrieking and howling from the forest. The guide rose when the song began, but the full touching tones of the men's voices restrained his haste; turning away from them, he remained sitting, gazing on the golden glow on the horizon.

When the song was ended, the stranger seated himself near the root and pushed the wallet to his companion. "Eat," he said, in a tone of

authority, to the youth, who made a gesture of refusal; "thou art unaccustomed to wandering; the Lord requires now the strength of thy body." The youth obediently took a few bits, and then laid himself down at the feet of the stranger, who covered him carefully with his mantle. Stillness reigned in the little enclosure. The last rays of the evening vanished into a pale light that passed slowly towards the north, sometimes the night-wind rustled among the leaves, and the owls screamed out to the wanderers their cries of lamentation; but from the forest there sounded far and near the voices of animals, then the weary horses rose from the ground snorting, terrified. The stranger sat immovable, with his hands folded; when the tree rustled he looked up into the branches as if in expectation, and then towards the heavens, over which a deep darkness had spread itself.

Meanwhile the guide gazed down into the depth below, where in the twilight the white mist of the water passed over the stream. "I behold," he murmured in a low tone, "how they float over the flood, veiled in white dresses; they occupy themselves around the water; they contrive help and safety to their faithful one; they conceal his path from the pursuer, and they

deliver him from the hands of the enemy ; many a time when I have lain under the ash-tree I have heard their song below. My fathers wandered here in days of difficulty, and prayed for help from the white women. I have understood that they have been the protectors of my race from primeval times. Now I am uneasy about the millstone, which the stranger has brought up with his magic under the tree—what does the sign portend to me ? The roots of the tree pass through the stone, primeval is the stone, as the stranger says, and it is older than the tree of the Gods. And before the tree existed and the Gods ruled, my ancestors already lived. What was the God who then graciously protected them ? Long has fortune and victory been removed from my race ; the brown Avars slew my grandfather ; my father was killed by a Wend when I was yet little ; and my mother died in sorrow. The joy of the earth has vanished everywhere. Seldom now do the Gods extend good fortune to my people, and a foreign God comes into the valleys. The house is burnt that once stood on the height, and the fortunes of my family are burnt, and my heart is full of grief. Those yonder pray in foreign fashion, they have a strong trust in their God. If they are fools, our

Gods may show their power upon them." A flash of lightning quivered at the back of the suppliant, the thunder rolled, and Ingram cried out his war cry. "Happy for me, I hear the roaring of his carriage; he comes to revenge the impiety of the stranger;" he threw himself on the ground, and covered his head.

The storm shook the leaves of the tree, and cast leaves and branches about the travellers. But these raised once more their pious song, amidst the thunder and the rushing rain; it sounded through the stillness of the night like a song of victory above the raging of nature. After the storm had passed over the mountains the song ceased, and again all was still within the enclosure, only the drops of rain struck gently on the tree-leaves. Thus the night passed, and in the first morning dawn a dark figure rose before the fence, and the guide looked in at the stranger.

"Thy night couch was windy under the open sky," began the stranger; "thine ash gave a shelter from the storm, though not from the water of the clouds. If thou hast the skill to light a fire on the wet ground, thou wilt do good service to my boy and thyself; if not, let us depart, that warmth may come to the limbs of my companion."

"It is a long day's journey to the forest woods of Thuringia," replied the leader; "and loss of time might cause misfortune." He felt with curiosity the mantle of the stranger. "But thou art wet," he added joyously, "the rain has touched thee also."

"As God wills," answered the other.

The men equipped themselves rapidly for their departure; the stranger then took out the leather bag from under the tree-root and knotted the straps carefully to the saddle of the horse, to which the youth, meanwhile, was giving food out of the fodder-bag. Then both bent down once more before the wooden cross, and spoke the blessing for the journey. Ingram led them over the ruined rampart and trench into the mountain forest. He now rode quicker than on the last day, but his sharp look again searched every bush and stone. Whenever they came from the forest into the meadow land, he gave a signal to the strangers to remain behind, and after a time raised his hand, as a sign to them to follow him. Laborious was the road, over roots of trees and through swamps which had collected in the deep places in the wood. Then he himself took the horses by the bridle and pointed out to the youth the firmest

places. He was as silent as yesterday, but he took more care about the travellers. Once when they were riding from a height down into a wide valley, he said: "Here we must go through the open country; if you hear me cry 'tarry,' then turn your horses back as fast as they can carry you into the forest; perhaps your flight may be successful."

The stranger laughed. "Have no anxiety about us, and think only of thy own safety."

"Exercise the horse, that it may leap," advised the guide.

When they again rode into the forest the stranger began thankfully: "Thou showest thyself kind-hearted, and the character of thy people is said to be faithful."

"The Thuringian is firm in love and hate," said the guide.

"But his hate is not that of a deceitful man," replied the stranger, laughing. "The path which thou leadest us does not go straight out to the north."

"He who will avoid a fight must turn like a fox when the hounds give tongue. See there in the distance a blaze of a fire," he pointed with his hand through the stems; "what is burning there is a house."

"Perhaps it was done by the thunderstorm."

"The fire rises up in a quiet night."

The stranger looked seriously at the faint light which glanced in the twilight over the edge of the horizon.

"Dost thou know the master of the house?" asked the stranger.

"He is a Frank," replied the Thuringian, coldly; "his grandfather came far from the West into this country.

"Does the Thuringian look quietly on when his countrymen are slain?"

"Ask the great lord of the Franks, and not me, why he allows his country people to be slain by the foreigners," cried out the guide. "Once we Thuringians were a victorious people, then the Franks broke into the land, and with them the Saxons and Angli; our warriors fell on the field of battle, and the foreigners divided among them the fields of the countrymen. They say that then most of our warriors trod the path of death. Now an envoy of the Frank King rules over us; he calls us to arms when it pleases him. I saw how the last were slain by the Wends; since, then, we forest people are defenceless, and our elders have concluded peace with the enemy,—do not ask me at what

price,—every year I see the hoofs of our cattle go into the Slave country; but few come out of it.”

“But thou carriest spear and sword,” interrupted the stranger severely.

“Wilt thou try whether they cut?” burst forth the Thuringian. He tore his jacket open, and pointed to a long red scar. “I think I have given more than I have received. Yet there is little honour,” he murmured, “in boasting to a weaponless man.”

“I speak with good intentions,” said the stranger appeasingly. “I think you have slaughtered many horses in honour of those whom you extol as Gods, and whom I call fiends, and I fear indeed that other blood has flown from the sacrificial stone, still more horrible to the God whom I serve, and yet your Gods were too weak to give you the victory against the arrows of the Wends. I do not consider a man wise who supports himself on a reed-stalk when his knees totter.”

“The God of battle measures men’s lots as he thinks right; he bestows victory on whom he will,” replied the guide.

“Thy speech is foolish, if I rightly understand thee. For there are other Gods, to whom the

Wends sacrifice, and when they drive homewards the people from your villages, then they sing that their God is stronger than yours."

"Does the Christian's God give victory to those who acknowledge him? I saw many of my country people who make the sign of the Cross slain on the battle-field."

"Not every one who bears the stamp of the Cross is a warrior with the eternal God," answered the stranger impressively. "He who prays for victory to the great Lord of Heaven must first by his own life make himself worthy of God's help, live truly according to God's commands, and avoid every mean action. High and severe is the service, but glorious the reward; here victory, and peace and happiness in heaven. And I tell thee that thy people will not obtain mastery over the foreigner till the banner of the Cross is carried before you, and the heart and thoughts of each one of you have been sanctified by the great God of the Christian."

"Teach that also to the King of the Franks, or whoever rules them; for we hear that the King has been corrupted by the Christian faith to become a monk, and that one of his heroes rules in the land."

The guide turned away, and the stranger spoke

to his companion: "Thou hearest his words. The Thuringian hates the Frank, and both hate the Saxon; one race destroys the other, and the honour of their heroes is to shed the blood of men, and to drive away a defenceless race, in order that they may satisfy their desires on them, and use their backs as a stool for their feet. Since I was a boy in a distant land I have seen men committing wild outrages; to rob and kill was the hellish cry which came from a hundred thousand throats. Truly the garden of the earth has become a wilderness, everywhere devastation and the ruined buildings of former races, and those who now live there wander about howling like a troop of wolves. And where a populous nation still inhabit the ground, which they have won by fire and sword, the conquerors lead a disorderly life, always greedy for gold treasure, and the pleasures of the flesh. An evil devil has entirely corrupted this race, which is possessed by him, and yet they stop their ears against the message of grace, even when they call themselves Christians and use the sign of the Cross. There is no safety for those who walk uprightly according to the likeness of God, but the one thing: that all bend their stiff necks to the one Lord, of whom it is written, 'My yoke is easy,'"

The country which they were now passing through lay in the valley or on the slopes of the mountains, where a powerful spring ran out of the ground; here and there villages and single farms of Frank settlers, most of the farms were small, the houses crumbling to pieces, and scantily mended, and near them often empty charred homesteads. Every home and every village was surrounded with ramparts, but the ramparts and trenches also were ruined and broken. They saw few people in the fields; in the villages the children and women ran to the fences of their houses staring at the travellers; the guide greeted them proudly, and the respectful manner in which it was returned showed that he was considered, by the people, as a distinguished man.

Sometimes on the gable of the house a cross was painted over the sign of the possessor: then the traveller blessed the dwellers at the door with a Christian greeting, who, observing him with surprise, hastened towards him. But the guide pushed onwards, and the calls and questions died away in the trot of the horses. Again they came to a village; the high straw roofs, which almost came to the ground, stood without fences; even the elder-tree was wanting which used to

show its black berries in every courtyard. Naked children, brown, and covered with dirt, rolled about with the pigs on the dung-heaps; the people were small, their faces round and flat, and, instead of the discreet quiet with which the horsemen were greeted elsewhere by the villagers, loud cries, scoldings and curses, in a foreign language, resounded from all sides.

"Are these foreigners numerous in your land?" asked the stranger.

"They are Wends from the East; they inhabit many villages both here and in Thuringia; they pay rent to the Frank Count, but they continue evil-disposed and quarrelsome."

He stopped his horse and listened to the curses which a frightful woman was screaming out to them, then he spurred his horse again and called out, "Forwards!" They passed rapidly on, the guide often rising in his saddle and turning his eyes right and left.

After a time the stranger rode up to his side: "If it pleases thee, tell me why we press our horses so fleetly on?"

"I understand very little of the language of the Wends," answered Ingram; "but the good-for-nothing woman wished us evil if we met the warriors of her people on our way. There is

disturbance in the air; ever since the morning the hawks and crows fly northwards; I repent me that I have not questioned those who speak our language." He called out to his horse and galloped forward; the travellers had difficulty in following him; he rode up at full speed to the next house, which was visible on a height, and signed to the others to remain behind. The travellers saw him stop on the hill, but soon he chased wildly down, and then on before them. When at last they reached a steep ascent, the stranger asked: "Wilt thou not tell us whether danger threatens?"

"The house and the stalls were empty: every head had disappeared; I wonder that no fugitive comes towards us," replied the guide gloomily.

"Forwards," he exclaimed, "if I am not to abandon you."

"Dost thou think to avoid danger if we tire our horses before the evening?"

"I will see," replied Ingram shortly; and rode forward again.

Thus they went on for an hour through under-wood and over meadow land; at last they saw in the distance, on one side of the road, a large house among lime-trees; the guide's horse flew like an arrow up to the house; they perceived

that the guide sometimes stopped, then with wide leaps disappeared behind the trees. The travellers followed him slowly. When they came up they found the roof torn off, the door broken in, and charcoal from the fire in front of the house. The guide was bending over something that lay in the grass. It was a dead man, his head fractured by the stroke of a club.

"This was the Host of the house," said the guide, with quivering lips. "He was by race a Frank, but a hospitable man; and he has fallen as a warrior. Look in there." The earth was heaped up and divided into two round mounds. "The robbers have buried their dead."

"When did it happen?" asked the stranger sorrowfully.

"Yesterday before the day was warm," replied the guide, pointing to the body of a Slave horse, which lay near them, struck by the spear of the possessor of the house. The stranger sprang down and hastened to the house: "Come, that we may bring help, if any one still breathes there."

"Thou takest useless trouble," replied the guide; "his daughter Walburg and his little boy have been carried off. The cow with the white spot has been slaughtered, and a Slave sits on

his horse Goldfeather; the Wends know how to clear away; they do not love half work."

The stranger seized a spade, and began to dig a grave. "It would be advisable for thee to escape from this place," exclaimed the guide, disquieted. The other pointed to a cross that was drawn with blue woad on the naked arm of the dead: "He is of my faith, and I must not go before I have secured his body from the wolves and vultures."

The guide stepped back and murmured: "Many a man who has the stamp of the Cross lies to-day still on the bloody ground." The travellers hollowed out the grave, laid the dead man within, knelt in prayer, covered the grave with earth, and placed a wooden cross upon it. Then the stranger made a sign to the youth to go away, and remained alone lying before the earth-mound.

Meanwhile the guide hastened forwards on the track of the enemy: he sprang like a hunting-hound over the grass; the strangers were already waiting for him when he returned with a glowing countenance. "I have discovered their course, and the footsteps of the women and children; only one of the horses was shod—I think that is a horse of Ratiz, the Sorbe Chieftain. I

shall strike him well in a few days," he cried out threatening. "Answer me one question, stranger: wouldst thou rejoice to see Ratiz slain with his band?"

"No," replied the stranger.

"He has killed men of thy faith, and leads their children into miserable servitude."

"I tell thee, no," repeated the stranger.

The guide muttered a curse; suddenly he went up to the horse of the stranger: "Confess to me what thou dost carry in the leather bag that thou guardest so carefully."

"Such a question does not befit thee," answered the traveller coldly, "and I refuse to answer thee."

"I think that thou hast armlets and silver therein, such as foreign traders bring into the country," said the guide, staring covetously at the leather bag.

"Perhaps what thou namest is therein," said the stranger, "but perhaps not; what does it signify to thee? It can never become thine."

The guide gave him a hostile look; then his countenance became convulsed, he threw himself on the ground, covering his face with his hands. The stranger took his axe, and placed it in the recumbent man's hand, which he had withdrawn

from before his face, and laid the axe on it. "Here is the weapon, my son, and here is the head of a defenceless man: if thou wilt strike, then try the blow. But if thou wouldst rather listen, attend to the words of an older man." Ingram let the weapon fall into the grass, and sat with head bowed down to the ground. "I know what disturbs thee," continued the stranger; "the robbers have carried off a young woman into their mountains; thou thinkest to deliver her by thy weapons, or by purchase, and thou thinkest that the stranger should help thee to this. Do I speak the truth, tell me?"

"She spoke proudly to me," he answered in a low voice, "because I stood under the oak, by the horse sacrifice, according to the custom of my fathers. But it is horrible to me that she should remain in the hands of Ratiz; and it fell on my soul like a flash out of the clouds that I must hasten to ransom her. Then I will lead her as a prisoner home; she will become my own, and I her lord."

"And she must do according to thy will," said the stranger coldly; "but how, if thy enemy Ratiz thinks the same?"

The guide gnashed his teeth, and threw himself again on the grass.

"They are like the brute beasts," said the stranger in the Latin language. "Stand up, guide," he commanded in a quiet tone, "and accomplish first of all what thou hast sworn. Now thine honour demands that thou shouldst bring us safely to thy home, even though we may be strange and unwelcome to thee. When thou art free from this duty, then weigh well what will be the next thing for thee to do. But do not forget that the woman whom thou desirest, follows a thorny path under powerful protection. For she will be guided by the winged messengers of my God, the angels, that she may be preserved for this world or carried up to the heavenly hall of Christ. Even though she has been carried off by a band of Sorbes, yet she is in the hand of a kind Father, who hears all who call upon Him in time of need. If it is His will that she should be delivered by thee, it will come to pass. But do thou what is now thy duty."

The guide stood up, shook himself, and sprang silently into his saddle. Then the wanderers passed on farther to the north, each one occupied with himself; the stranger spoke occasionally some Latin words to his companion. When the sun set they entered the dark forest

of the mountains which divide Thuringia from Franconia.

They heard behind the trees barking of hounds, and amidst it a deep discordant growl. "Art thou taking us into a bear's den?" asked the stranger.

"Here dwells Bubbo, the vagrant," replied the leader; "he catches bears, knows how to restrain their anger, and sells them far southwards in the land of the Franks to manor-houses, and sometimes to travellers. His house is feared throughout the whole country; he has peace with friend and foe, and understands many secret arts."

"Is he of thy faith?" asked the stranger.

"Few know to what Gods he prays," said the guide.

"Then let us avoid the inhospitable house."

"Look at the sky, the night will bring rain; thy boy and our horses need a night's rest, for to-morrow we ascend over the forest on a wild path, where no host will receive us."

The man looked at the youth by his side, and gave a silent sign of assent. When they came nearer, the yelling of the hounds became wilder, mixed with the grunting voices of a bear family, and when Ingram knocked at the door the noise raged so loudly that the stranger clasped

his cross. Long did the leader knock at the door. At last there was the sound of a man's step and a rough call to the animals; Ingram called out his name through the door, the fastening bar was pushed back, and the gigantic figure of a man stepped into the opening of the door. The guide spoke in a low tone with the Host. The latter by a short movement of the hand invited them to enter; he laid hold of the trembling horses by the bridle and drew them into the court-yard, closing the door behind them. The travellers unloaded their beasts in the dark, then Ingram and the Host led the horses to a stable. When the men stepped on to the firm clay floor of the hall, the Host held a pine torch to the flaming charcoal of the wooden logs which lay on the hearth, and lighted the faces of his guests with the sooty flame. When he perceived the face of the stranger he stepped back, the torch slipped out of his hand, and sparkled on the ground till the guide laid hold of it and put it into the iron ring by the hearth.

"Never could I have thought to find thy face in my hut. Ungracious was the greeting that thou gavest me the first time that I saw thee; thou didst cause me to be hunted away with my bears from the house of thy guest friend."

"And the second time that I saw thee," answered the stranger quietly, "I delivered thy neck from the withe that was wound for thee. And when I saw thee the third time thou didst stand to be baptized by me in a white shirt, and the holy water ran over thy head."

"The baptismal shirt has long been torn; the last time it was less valuable, truly, than in earlier years, when I consented to be ducked in your water; and unwillingly does a man think on the hour of danger in which he bends his head before foreign magic," replied the Host timidly. "Thou hast caused me woe and thou hast caused me weal. Yet I think thou art a man learned in great secrets, and I also am reputed by people as one who knows much. And if I give thee peace under my roof, thou mayest as a mark of gratitude still teach me many secrets."

"I will teach thee," said the stranger, "if thou hast ears to hear."

"Well, what has passed before shall be compensated and forgotten, and I will provide thee as my guest, thee and thy companions, with evening fare and lodging, and I greet thee at my hearth, thee, Herr Winfried, before whom people kneel, and whom they call Boniface and a Bishop."

When the travellers, on the evening of the

following day, rode out of the dark pine forest, from the mountain height they beheld low hills, and in the distance open country. Before them lay at the foot of the mountain a village: the roofs and rafters were grey, and round it was a wooden fence, and a broad ditch. The houses in the village alleys stood thickly packed, in order that defence from a hostile attack might be easier. Outside the fence, on the mountain slope, rose two single houses, removed a few bow-shots from one another. A footpath led to each from the village road. At the spot where these paths separated Ingram stopped and said shortly: "I have guided you into the land of the Thuringians; this is the village, and there is the house of the Frank, whom they call a Major Domus of the Count, and there he stands himself. I have accomplished what I promised; ride on there."

Whilst the strangers bowed their heads in thankfulness to their God, and prayed for a blessing on their entrance, Ingram galloped off, and had already disappeared behind a projection of the wood before Winfried looked after him. But from the other side the Frank steward came towards them, a man with grey hair and serious countenance. Winfried gave him the Christian greeting, and the face of the man coloured with

joy as he answered, "To all eternity." And when Winfried held out to him a segment of parchment leaf, the token of recognition which was sent by the steward's lord, then he reverently took his hat off his head, seized himself the bridle of the horse, and led the strangers to his house.

II.

A CHRISTIAN AMONG THE HEATHEN.

BELOW the village on the plain stood a decayed house, surrounded by a wooden fence, on which the dusty burdock spread its grey leaves; the fence was full of holes and carelessly mended, and the fowls and pigs of the courtyard without difficulty found an entrance into it all the year round. Behind the gate a wooden cross was erected on two poles, as a sign that Meginhard, whom they called Memmo, the Christian Priest, dwelt there. Reluctantly had the village people, years ago, given him permission to dwell in the empty hut on the application of the Count. Yet within it was not entirely deficient in comfort. Through the crevices of the closed shutters one saw a bright fire shining on the hearth. Beside it sat Memmo, a little plump man; before him stood on a bad wooden table a mug of beer; on the hearth was a pot with a fowl

in it, which was being cooked, and a strong maid-servant was moving about with a wooden spoon. "The fowl is long in steaming, Godelind," said the little man, looking longingly at the pot; "hang up the spoon and lay on wood, for that is the only thing that one has in abundance in this country." But Godelind cared little about the sighs of her master; she moved crossly about the hearth, and looked sometimes angrily down upon the Priest. "Certainly my master might have obtained a better present from the sick neighbour than the thing there,"—she pointed with the spoon to a corner of the hut, where on a truss of straw squatted a Slave maiden, who, with sunk head, was staring before her. "For many weeks you have charmed away the bad spirits which lay in the diseased leg of the man; for all this trouble this is miserable thanks,—a captive, a poor sick thing, good for nothing. Why has he not given you a calf for your housekeeping? Often have I advised you to give him a hint of your opinion about it. We have hardly sufficient to feed two mouths; now there comes a third, and besides, a wild thing with tangled hair, who cannot speak a word, and gives me fresh cares in addition to those I have about you."

Memmo looked slyly into the corner. "And yet I took her for thy sake, Godelind," he said appeasingly; "for the meadow and the field, which I wish to spare thee."

"Have I ever complained of my work?" said the ruler of the hearth sulkily, only a little softened. "Now I must keep watch over the foreign beast." She put the cooked fowl into an earthen platter, and placed the hot dish with a spoon before her master. A fragrant odour rose up; Memmo sat waiting for the cooling, and rattled impatiently with a wooden spoon on the edge of the platter. Then there was a creaking outside at the fence, and immediately afterwards a stick knocked at the door four times, with short pauses. The spoon fell from the hand of the Priest; he started up frightened, stared at the door as if he feared a spirit, and, after the third knock, murmured half unconsciously, "*In nomine spiritus sancti. Amen.*" The last knock resounded, and immediately afterwards the door was flung open by a strong hand, a man entered in a dark dress, and a deep voice spoke on the threshold: "I greet thee in the name of the Lord." Memmo stood dumb; all the colour faded from his face. Winfried examined for a moment the dweller of the hut; then he approached the

window, opened the window shutters, took the dish and the fowl and threw them out, so that the pot cracked, and called out in a tone of command : " Away with the women." Godelind had set her arms a-kimbo, not at all intending to obey the command of the stranger ; but when she saw that her master signed to her with eager movements of the hand to go away, she remarked that the flaming look of the stranger was directed to her, and her courage forsook her ; she dragged away the captured slave, and hastened to the door. " Seek another dwelling for the night, woman," cried Winfried after her, " for thy foot will scarcely tread this man's cell again." He closed the door behind the woman, bolted it, and approached the speechless Memmo. " Thou hast come into misfortune, my companion," he said sorrowfully, " and I find thee in evil society. I come to warn thy soul ; on thy knees, Meginhard, my poor brother, and confess thy evil deed, for the day of penitence is come ; see to it, that thou mayest gain the favour of the Judge."

The monk, confounded, fell on his knees before the bishop, and began to murmur a Latin prayer. The hearth flame blazed brightly around, and cast the shadows of the men hither and thither. The water in the cooking-pot raised the cover,

and hissed upon the hearth; but no one cared about it, and the flame sank, and the water was silent. It became dark in the room, the glowing coals threw a weak twilight, and on the other side a pale light of the stars was visible through the window opening, but still the Priest continued to lie on the ground; only heavy sighs and the humming of solemn prayer were heard. Then the sharp strokes of a scourge and a low groaning: thus it continued through the night. And when the starlight passed away, in the dawn of a new day, Memmo still lay with his face to the ground, his arms stretched out in the form of a cross, and by him knelt the stranger, the deep tones of whose voice sounded solemnly above the sobbing of the prostrate man.

Winfried opened the door; the early morning light penetrated into the dusky room. At the gate of the fence stood young Gottfried, who bent himself silently before the teacher, for the hour had not come when a brother might speak. "I imagined thee well sheltered, on the bed of the guest friend," said the stranger, signing to him permission to speak.

"Forgive me, my father; anxiety about thee brought me here."

“Within there lies one who has fallen; tarry by him, that he may behold thy face when he raises his head, and support his tottering steps;” then he added in a low tone: “as a linnet that has escaped from the farmer I have caught him, and his soul will flutter unquietly. Help him, although he is older than thou, that he may accustom himself again to discipline, and yield to him what thou thinkest right. For it would not be wise to take away all consolation from the erring one.”

The stranger went to the village, where people were beginning to stir in the houses; the young monk placed himself softly near the penitent: it was not long before the latter, shuddering, raised his head cautiously, and saw with astonishment instead of the fearful bishop a youth sitting near him, in whose bright countenance shone warm compassion. “*Visio Venit*, a peace messenger appears,” he murmured in alarm, and fell back on his face, in order to raise it again after a time. “I feel warm breath over my head; if thou art one of us, speak.”

“I am called Gottfried, my father, and I am thy brother and servant.”

“Has he gone forth?” sighed Memmo, looking round him with terror, and feeling his wounded

back with his hand. With difficulty he sat up and laid hold of his head with both hands. "I am entirely changed; he threw the platter with the fowl out of the window, and sent Frau Godelind,"—he crossed himself—"away to the devil. I have been tempted, my son, among the heathen; I have sat amongst horses' heads and horses' flesh, and when in May they danced the round dance they required that I with Frau"—he crossed himself again. "Undoubtedly the Bishop is a holy man, entirely raised above human weakness. Thou also knowest the rules, my brother, although thou art young."

Gottfried gave a friendly nod.

"Then thou knowest also, my son, that it is allowed to the faithful after penance to moisten their hot lips, *aqua cum aceto*, by water with vinegar. There is no vinegar in this country, but," he continued persuasively, "there stands in its place the remains of some small beer,—there is water enough in it; I pray you reach me the mug." Gottfried fetched willingly the drink; the exhausted man took a deep draught, then held the mug in his folded hands and began dolefully his morning prayer. Gottfried spoke the words with him, then he shook the straw in the corner straight for a bed, led the wounded man to the

place of rest, and prayed by him in a low tone till the father slept.

When Winfried later in the day returned to the monk, he found him sitting on his chair in better spirits. Gottfried had cleaned the cell and erected a little altar, and hung it with fig branches and sweet-smelling thyme. When the bishop entered Memmo made an attempt to rise, but Winfried placed him gently back in the chair. "I do not come now as a physician, who finds it necessary to give remedies to his invalid; I place myself by thee as an old companion, and if it is not too troublesome to thee, I pray thee, my brother, inform me truly what difficulties thou hast had to contend with amongst this people, for verily the office was not easy that was committed to thee, and I do not find thee amidst pleasant work."

"I can tell thee nothing favourable, revered father," began Memmo dejectedly; "five years have I dwelt among this race, like Daniel in the lions' den; their hearts are hardened and their spirits defiant, and the best among them have hours when they bear themselves like evil devils from hell. There are few who believe, and they only believe when they have a dislocated leg, or are shaken by the evil spirit of fever: then they

send to me that I may pray beside them, and they eagerly make the sign of the cross; but on the following day they send for the heathen woman, who practices magic arts, and then make the sign of the hammer over their bodies. They often ask whether our God will procure them victory over the Slaves and Saxons: if so, they would gladly try Him. He must vow Himself to be their servant, but they will not do the same by Him."

"Dost thou know the Christians of this country?" asked Winfried impatiently. "As it is for this thou hast been sent here, as the swallows send beforehand their messengers."

"I think that I know them well, as far as the land reaches from the Saale to the Werra," replied Memmo. "And I wrote to thee according to thy order the names of those who are of some consideration, and are the most faithful. But of Priests I am the only lamb among howling wolves. For there are others who are called Christian Priests, but they are of pure devil's brood; they keep more than one wife, they sit with the heathen at the sacrificial feasts, and hang horses' heads next their crosses; also they will have nothing to do with our great Father in Rome. In olden times these came into the land; they paint coloured signs on their skin."

"Scotch wild cats," cried Winfried angrily.

"I have suffered much here by blows and by words of contumely," continued Meginhard. "But the worst happened to me last year, when the Wends fell upon the country. The Thuringians opposed them not far from the Saale; and they threatened me, and called upon me to be their guest and enjoy their protection, that I might go with them, and, as an unwarlike man, stand on the hill near their troop, and from thence pray for victory for them. They carried me forth and placed me on high; but the Wends overpowered them, slew a heap of them, broke into and set fire to the villages, and led the women and children away into servitude. They also caught me, bound me with withes, and drove us like a herd of sheep eastwards into slavery. Miserable was the journey, among heathen women and weeping children; he who sank down, and could no longer walk, received the stroke of a club, and was left on the road. Scanty also was the travelling fare: they offered one broth in troughs like boars. Two days and nights we wandered thus along the path of anguish, till we beheld the villages of the Wends and the poles on which hung the banners of their Chieftain. There they divided us among

the villages, and I, with a number of others, became the portion of the Sorbe Ratiz, the horrible man who has entrenched his circular fortress on this side of the Saale. The heathen held a great feast, and they destined me to a miserable death, because they saw my shaven head, and the devils spat upon the crown of my head. I lay bound and helpless; then Herr Ratiz entered the stall, and asked me through another man who accompanied him of what lineage and race of men I was. But I told him that I was a monk, and thou the venerable Father, to whom I had vowed myself for a journey among the Thuringians. Then the Lord softened his heart, so that he loosed me from my bonds, and through his attendant disclosed to me in great secrecy that he wished to send a messenger to the ruler of the Franks in the West, and he knew that thou wast a powerful peacemaker, and could easily make intercession for what he desired. And the crafty wolf, who was satiated with murder in our sheepfolds, maintained that he also loved peace; but that the border Counts of the Franks were plunderers and bloodthirsty. I was obliged to promise to bring thee this message as quickly as I could. So I was released, fed and clothed, and taken

into the neighbourhood of our villages. As I forthwith announced to thee, in my letter, Hunibald, the Frank, took me with him on his journey to the West."

"I have read what thou hast written," replied Winfried. "Meanwhile the wolf has become hungry and has broken again into the land of the Franks. Hast thou learnt what he desires from Prince Karl, who rules over the Franks? for the Franks and the Slaves can keep the peace as little as two moles in one hole."

"It appears to me that he desires presents, and perhaps the land that he has possessed himself of."

"Will he confess and renounce the works of the devil?" asked Winfried.

"Sooner would a fox in a trap bite its own tail off; there is no more piety in him than in a hollow nut."

"Many who bear the stamp of the cross are equally empty," replied Winfried. "If he is a cold heathen, his children may become warm Christians. But now tell me about another man; thou knowest Ingram, whom the heathen call Ingraban?"

"I have not learnt much good of him; he is one of the enemies of the Cross; he dwells up

there on the place which they call 'Raven House,' for the black heathen birds make their nests in the trees there, and croak their fiendish songs. But he is forward in all fights, and holds the hearts of the youths in his hand. During that battle, I saw his comrades carry him wounded out of the fight, and they think that if he had ridden in front to the end, the Slaves would not have conquered."

Winfried rose, and looked enquiringly into the corner of the hut. "The law commands that brothers shall dwell together under one roof; it does not befit me to lodge with strangers, where a brother has a house. Take care to prepare a bed for me here."

Memmo heard with fear this decision. "The hut is small, venerable Father, the roof is damaged, the rain runs in, and bad is the fare; yet I do not think if it were better that thou wouldst care for it. Also, venerable Father, forgive me; the little birds which I have hitherto kept here, sing loud, and they deposit eggs sometimes shamelessly. My lord, dost thou command me to cause the little birds to fly away? They flew to me in the cold winter; many of them flitted into the air in the spring, but some have built their nests between the rafters; they have brought up two

broods; and many a time, when I was dejected their chirp has rejoiced me. '*Peccavi,*'" he continued, almost weeping; "it is a sin to cling with one's heart to a creature; but, Father, they will come again, unless I wring their necks; above all, the goldfinch, it is the most beautiful bird in this country."

Winfried listened gloomily to the lament of the undisciplined monk. "Do not give thy brother less willingly a night's rest than thy playfellows in feathered dress."

"Fruitless was my work on the hearts of men," continued Memmo, sorrowfully; "sooner would the birds retain the holy word. Every year I catch young ravens and jays, teach them the Kyrie Eleison, and let them fly away again. In the clearing of the woods thou canst sometimes hear their voices when they sing the holy words. On Ingram, also, I thought to revenge myself for many injuries that he has occasioned me, and I placed my young ravens on his tree, that they might call upon the name of the Lord among the heathen birds; but the other ravens flew furiously against them, and plucked their feathers, because their song was repugnant to the wild creatures; and they came back to me. But even these which I have

tamed do not leave off their tricks ; they eat my little companions ; and since the last hard winter the little ones alone remain with me. Forgive me, reverend Father."

"I am not angry with thee, my brother," replied Winfried. "When I sent thee out, I knew that thou wast no sower for stony land, but of kindly heart ; and I thought that the heathen here would perhaps bear with thee, because thou art well meaning. Thou wast to me as a spy who has gone into the promised land. Now I am come myself to subdue these people to my Lord."

Gottfried led through the open gate into the court a horse loaded with baggage ; he fastened the animal to the post, lifted down the leather sack, and carried it into the hut. A warm ray of love and care fell from Winfried's eyes upon him. "What did the guide say who parted from us in so unfriendly a way ?"

"I had difficulty in getting to him," replied the weak voice of the monk ; "the servants turned me roughly away : at last the heart of one was moved ; at my request he led me to the enclosure where the man was coupling his horses, like one who would remove them. I told him thy message, but he listened impatiently : 'Never would I have guided thy lord, if I had known

his office. Pay for my convoy I do not desire, neither an armlet, nor Frank silver; nor does his gratitude rejoice me, and he must expect no good-will from me, if in the future he should require it.' Thus he spoke, and stood before me like Turnus, the dark hero, of whom the Roman Virgil tells us that he rose against King Æneas."

"Thy King Æneas, my son," replied Winfried, laughing, "has no other weapons against the wild man, than an upright intention to be of use to him and others. But do thou pray that we may succeed in this." Winfried approached the table, loosened the strap of the leather bag, took a wooden box out, and gave the bag solemnly to the Priest. "Guard it like the light of thine eyes, Meginhard; it contains holy bones, also dresses and vessels for the Church which we intend to build here." Whilst Memmo was looking with open eyes at the Bishop, and then at the receptacle of the treasures, Winfried gave a sign to the youth, and left the hut with him.

With powerful strides the Bishop hastened up the hill which rose above the forest, followed by Gottfried, who led the horse. On the height Winfried stopped. "Quicker than I thought," he began, with agitated voice, "has the hour come in which I must send thee on a rough path to the

heathen, thou child of my sister. I must expose to the dangers of the wilderness what is dearest to me : may the Lord forgive me, if I tremble with anguish for a messenger in His service ! ”

“ Trust me, my Father,” begged Gottfried.

“ Thou must give the Sorbe Ratiz an answer to the request he made me ; thou knowest the request, and thou knowest the answer.”

“ I know them, Father.”

“ Thou must help to deliver the prisoners for the heathen Ingram. For I vowed thee to the Lord of Heaven to venture on this mission, when I knelt by the grave of the Frank ; but passionate and ungracious is the man whom I wish to gain for thee as companion.” Winfried strode onwards ; again he stopped. “ I was a youth like thee when, in the land of the Angli, our home, I first entered a ruined stone building which had been erected by the Romans centuries before. For in ancient times, before the message of the Lord came to the country-people, the nations were kept in subjection by the great empire of the Romans, who had almost everywhere entrenched themselves in solid fortresses. Then I saw how warriors of my race had driven together, into the stone building, a crowd of women and children, whom they had carried off from the neighbouring

villages. I heard the lashes of the whip and the wailing, and I saw the sword-strokes by which the defenceless ones were slaughtered ; I lay only one hellish night on the Roman stones.

“For the murderers and the murdered both boasted of being Christians ; and I perceived, with horror, that God’s teaching on earth had lost its saving power. Everywhere the Bishops were quarrelling with one another ; one abused the other as a teacher of error, struck him in the face, or shook his knife against him, so that scarcely any one did according to the command of the Lord ; and as the shepherds, so also were the flocks—entirely corrupted. I saw all sin and wantonness in rich luxuriance, and the heathen often more righteous than the Christians. I thought that I should become mad at such misery on earth, and I prayed to the Lord of Heaven, to whom I had vowed myself, for deliverance for mankind from such misery. Then came to me a message of salvation ; like a fiery flame it coursed through my limbs, so that I sprang up in terror and bliss. Then was revealed to me what would bring salvation to mankind—a new discipline for the undisciplined, and new union for those who were enemies. Vanished is the dominion of the Romans ; but at

Rome there dwells now the pious follower of the Apostle. He will become a high Judge of all hearts and consciences, and shall govern upon earth as the great Chieftain of Heaven's King. We all must serve him in faith, as we do Kings and Chieftains in worldly things. It is my office to lead the nations of the earth to his service, Frieslanders, Saxons, Hessians, and Thuringians; and if the Lord is gracious, also the wild hordes who call themselves Wends: I will bring the peace of my God to all. In order that faith may become a saving power for the nations of the earth, I will teach them that one only God rules over them, a great Host in Heaven's Castle; and here on earth, the Bishop of Rome is to be revered and powerful over all, as His envoy. There shall be unity of teaching on the earth, and unity in obedience, in order that there may be also unity in love. Therefore have I preached among the Frieslanders and Hessians; therefore have I travelled to Rome, and on my knees have vowed myself, on the hand of the Pope, to be the servant of my God; and therefore I wander now here, through the weeds of the wild valleys, alone with thee, boy; for I will extinguish the sorrow of the world, and proclaim salvation to all who are now in misery. Such was the

command of our Lord to me on that night of anguish."

The youth kissed his hand reverently; Winfried held it fast, and spoke more quietly. "Thou, my loved one, who hast the years of a boy and the mind of a wise man, thou art true to me, and there are few thoughts which I conceal from thee. It is not the heathen that cause me the greatest trouble; greater is the work that I have where I might expect help. The Franks, who call themselves Christians—their Bishops, the disorderly offenders, who are always striving against each other—these appear to me the worst wolves. When I came before the Bishop of Rome to acknowledge that he must be the highest lord over the faith of men on earth, in order to save us all; it appeared to me, that though he was a worthy man, he was also a foolish one. There is much selfishness there, and greed after worldly power; but the Lord, to whom I have vowed myself, will help me to overcome the foolishness of the great, as well as the obstinacy of these long-haired wild men. Therefore do thou, my son, also follow me to the heathen; open thine ears, and learn the way which it is necessary for thee to know."

When they reached the height on which the

Raven House lay, a string of wild horses galloped towards them ; on one of them sat Ingram, on another his servant. Winfried stepped on to the road, so that Ingram's horse reared, and the heated rider, as he powerfully restrained it, stopped straight before the Bishop. "Why dost thou come thyself to detain me?" cried Ingram, angrily ; "unhappy was the hour when I vowed myself to thy service."

"He who goes out on a journey like thine," answered Winfried, "does not do wisely to begin the journey with a curse."

"I do not desire thy blessing, Christian ; I know how to obtain better defence than is given by thy token."

"And yet many in the Sorbe village, whose hands are tied together with withy-bands, trust in the holy sign which thou foolishly disdainest. If thou dost insult the God of Heaven, to whom the Christians pray, before thy journey, beware lest thine expedition should be fruitless."

The horseman had wished to push his horse on, but now he kept still, and looked gloomily down before him. "Restrain thy hot blood," continued Winfried, with dignity ; "well-considered counsel is useful before rapid deeds. Though I may be unwelcome to thee, yet do not

despise my words: descend, Ingram, if thou in truth wishest to deliver the woman."

So impressive was the admonition that the Thuringian sprang from his horse, and threw the bridle to his servant.

"Let what thou hast to say to me be short, stranger, for the ground burns under my feet." Winfried led the impatient man some steps aside. "Answer me one question, if thou wilt, which I make with good intentions, and with great anxiety about the prisoner. Dost thou carry what will serve thee with Ratiz for the ransom? Or dost thou hope to succeed by carrying off the wives and children of the Sorbes from their homes?"

Ingram answered, with quivering countenance, "He who approaches the lair of the robber must seize the spoil as he can. If I could penetrate unknown, I would endeavour secretly to carry her away."

"Thou didst tell me that you Thuringians had vowed peace with the Sorbes."

"Not I; I lay on my bed with bloody body."

"But the Elders have vowed it for thee also."

"The oath was broken by him, when he slew my guest-friend. Who can blame me, if I revenge the friendly man?"

"Thy people will ask whether thou art of the kindred of the dead man,—thou from the land of Thuringia, he a Frank."

Ingram was silent.

"And when the boundary watchers of the Sorbes discover thee, they are sure to know the custom of the boundary, and are preparing now for a revenge expedition of the Franks. Therefore I think—and it cannot be concealed from thee—that thou canst only deliver the prisoner in peace."

"Know then," replied Ingram, gloomily, "what I confess unwillingly, that I am seeking ransom-money by the sale of the horses which thou seest here; some of them are well worthy to bear the saddle of a King. It is uncertain whether Ratiz himself will take the horses; for the encampment of thieves, since their last expedition, is, I fear, full of hoofs. Therefore I will take the horses now to Erfurt, where the great market of my people is, to see whether I can barter them for armlets or Frank silver. But sale is difficult in time of need. That is the care which troubles me."

"And is there no other purchase-price which would have power over the will of the Slave?"

"The red gold of the dwarf, and silver which

the smith has skilfully stamped," replied Ingram, quickly. "That, the mean man cannot withstand. But such King's treasure the Thuringian has not."

Winfried drew forth the case, and opened it. He took from it a large goblet, the outside of silver, but gold inside, with a wreath of vine-leaves, and raised human figures in relief upon it—a wonderful piece of workmanship. "It comes from the treasury of a King, and was laid in my hands by a kingly man. Dost thou think that this piece will release the children for us?"

"Never did I see such a work by the hand of man," cried out the Thuringian, with sparkling eyes; "the children are silver, and naked; they walk about the goblet as if they lived." Composing himself, as if ashamed of his curiosity, he added, "So great a treasure would deliver many."

"Then blessed is the day," exclaimed Winfried, "when I received the goblet!"

But again a dark shadow passed over the face of the young warrior, and proudly returning the vessel, he cried out, "Go away with thy goblet, thou crafty stranger," and turned himself to the horses.

But Winfried held his arm. "Do not think,

Ingram, that I wish to buy thy favour by silver and gold ; for thou hast thyself refused to receive the pay of guide. If thou wert one of the children of the great God, then I might give thee the goldsmith's work for a Christian deed. But thou hast betrayed to me thy wild desire. Not as thy slave must thou bring the Frank woman home to thy house : to her and her kindred I give the goblet ; and if it saves her from imprisonment, she must return again as a free woman—she and others whom thou mayest release : that is my intention. But I beg of thee, for the sake of the prisoners, that thou shouldst accomplish the bargain for them all, and bring them hither, under the protection that they themselves desire.”

“Then thine will be the honour, and not miné,” exclaimed Ingram, vehemently.

“Not thou nor I will bestow the purchase-price. I myself possess less than the poorest of thy countrymen ; I am only a messenger of the Christian God, and this silver belongs to His treasure.”

The warrior looked shyly at the shining metal. “Conceal it in its wooden case, for I much fear that there may be evil magic in such a gift.”

“I also do not advise that thou shouldst carry

this purchase-price," continued Winfried; "I have to send a messenger to Ratiz on business from the King of the Franks—my young brother Gottfried. But thou wilt be the spokesman about the ransom; and I beg of thee to allow the youth to ride with thee, and that thou thyself wilt promise me to care for him truly."

"Rough is the way to the village of Ratiz; the journey must be quick; and the course of a rapid messenger among the mountains is not without danger: how can I preserve the boy from it?"

"Thou hast tried his strength, and thou hast not found him weak."

The warrior looked across at Gottfried, who was holding the bridle of the Bishop's horse, and his countenance became more friendly. He reflected. "I perceive," he said at last, "that thou rulest over my will like a master. I do not know whether it will be for my welfare, if I do according to thy desires; and if it were on my own account, I would not do it. But I see a woman sitting wringing her hands in slavery." He sprang up hastily, and exclaimed: "I vow to preserve the boy as one of my own kindred," and he laid his hand upon that of the Bishop; then he hastened to his string of horses,

and gave his men orders, and caused them to be led back to the court-yard. Meanwhile, Winfried spoke in a low tone to the youth, folding his hands over his head: deep sorrow agitated his face, as he spoke the journey-blessing over him.

"Come on, youth!" cried Ingram, swinging his javelin; "much time has been lost in the strife of words; let thy horse's hoofs ring on the journey to Sclaveland." He examined once more the horse and the peaceful rider; it pleased him that the youth sat firmly in the saddle, and he nodded to him graciously. He called aloud his "Gee Ho," and horses and riders started away on the forest road. Winfried looked after them, and raised his hands to heaven.

In the hut Memmo stood a long time before the leather bag; he crossed himself, and bending down, carried it into a corner. He laid straw carefully upon it, and seated himself in deep thought before it. Sometimes he shook his head. "Who shall build the Church? He and I. And who will hew the baptismal stone out of the rock? Again I. Many strokes of the hammer will this arm have to make, and this back will be bent under the burden of the beams. But who will go into the house of the

baptized? None but the swallows of the air and the mice of the field; till on some wild day the heathen people will spring on us, and with their swords make the sign of the cross on our skulls. From to-day I am a stranger in my own house; but it is written, 'Your rest is not here below, and man is like grass.'" Then the door of the house rattled, and a red face looked in at the window. "By all the good spirits! that is Frau Godelind. Away with thee, woman!" he cried vehemently, without moving from his place; "I do not know thee!"

"Thou art changed for the worse," cried the woman, angrily: "what magic has befooled thy mind?"

"Away with thee, Godelind!" cried Memmo, sharply; "if the Bishop sees thee, thou art lost; thou standest under the cross, and he has power over thee."

"I don't care a straw for your Bishop," exclaimed Godelind, throwing a straw to the priest, "and the same for you, who are nothing but a coward. Is this my reward for my faithful care, and all the service I have done you day and night, that you allow me to be turned out of the house by a stranger?"

"It is of little use to lament over the past,"

INGRABAN.

replied Memmo, in a hollow voice ; " I release myself from thee for the whole future. Seek a shelter with thy aunt, and keep the Slave maiden: only mind not to ill-treat the poor thing ; take for my sake the pig from the sty ; it must go with everything else, but be silent, and withdraw thyself, for I am in deep contemplation, and thy chattering is troublesome to me. This night has changed me, and I repent me that thy foot has ever trod over my threshold."

"Thou cowardly man!" cried Godelind, in sharp anger, "many a time yet wilt thou repent that thou hast driven thy servants from thee, and I will laugh when I think of the fool, who beside a cold hearth drinks water from the brook and chews uncooked beans." Her face disappeared from the opening, and immediately afterwards a discordant squeak sounded from the sty.

"There she is, carrying away," sighed Memmo, "what was the treasure of my house;" and he bowed his head submissively, till the goldfinch seated itself upon it, and warbled its song joyfully from the bald pate. Memmo raised his hand gently ; the bird fluttered down, and the monk kissed his red head.

III.

AT THE SORBE VILLAGE.

ON their road to the Sorbe village, the horsemen took an evening rest; the horses stood in a firm enclosure; Ingram and Gottfried lay under a tree, and Wolfram, the servant, was preparing the night repast by a large fire; he carried thither a leather flask, which was like a bottle. "The beer has been cooled by the water from the spring; I hope you may relish it." When Gottfried put the flask aside with thanks, Ingram said kindly, "Thou hast shown thyself hitherto a gallant riding-companion; do not despise our fare, though we are not of thy faith. For I observe that men quarrel together about many things, but they all do justice to food and drink."

"Do not be angry, my companion; I am unaccustomed to strong drink and the flesh of the springing deer. Yet, if it is agreeable to thee, I

will share thy repast;" and he laid aside his cake, ate a little of the meat, and drank of the beer.

"Tell me, if it does not annoy thee," continued Ingram, "art thou one of those who consider it wrong to embrace a woman?"

"It is as thou sayest," answered Gottfried, colouring.

"By my sword, you have wonderful customs," said Ingram, mockingly. "I keep two slaves, and when it pleases me they embrace me in their arms, but I would give both away, and every other woman on the earth, if I could gain the maiden on whose account we are riding. Man willingly enjoys his life: we are like the birds, who sing gaily and build their nests; but thou art like a grey screech-owl, who sits in the hole of a tree, and all the birds scream at him."

"My life also is not wanting in pleasures," replied Gottfried, laughing; "I am glad to travel with thee, even though thou thinkest meanly of me; for I like to help thee in a good work."

"What good will it do thee, if we succeed in ransoming the prisoners?"

"I fulfil the command of God, the Omnipotent Lord of Heaven."

"If thy Lord is omnipotent, as thou sayest, and gives thee a command to deliver the prisoners.

I am surprised that He does not rather prevent the others from carrying away prisoners."

"God has created men free, that they may dispose of their own fate. But as thou surveyest the pearls which are threaded in a row on a string, so does the great Ruler survey all the deeds that are done, nay, also all the thoughts of every earth-born man; and He prizes the qualifications of a man according to whether in this life he raises himself up among his fellow-men, or plunges down into the death-realm of the evil dragon. Therefore is it necessary for man to take care unceasingly, that he acts after the commands of his God."

"Truly," exclaimed Ingram, "that is hard service; and like servants you live under constraint; but I applaud the man who gives to the super-terrestrials the honour due to them, yet when he has to venture upon anything, asks, above all, whether it will bring him distinction and advantage."

"Is it not also an honour to thee, when the wives of thy country-people thank thee for having released them from the mills of the Sorbes, and when thou releasest the innocent children from blows, from hunger, and from ignominious service under the dirty people?"

Ingram considered. "They are the children of our neighbours on the other side of the mountain, and many of them I have perhaps held in my arms, but they are strangers to thee. No year passes in which herds of them are not driven to market into all countries."

"Had I gold and silver," exclaimed Gottfried, "I would ransom all; and were I a great hero I would save all."

"I well know that you Christians hold to one another like neighbours and friends."

"My Father has commanded me to bring back also the heathen women and their children, if we can do so," replied Gottfried.

"Then others would become prisoners," interposed Ingram.

"We are sent into the world that we may announce the commands of the heavenly King, who is so full of mercy that He wishes to give happiness and salvation to every one on man's earth. If ever the time should come when all follow His commandments, then will no one treat the other like a calf or an ox, but will consider him as is written: 'After the image of God was man created, and he shall walk upright among the beasts, who with bent heads shall do him service.'"

Ingram was silent for a time. "All the red gold of the dwarf, of which they say that it can never be measured, would not suffice to free all who are in slavery; and thou, who art not warlike, and of delicate body—wouldst thou undertake such a work?"

"I am a warrior, only thou dost not observe it," replied Gottfried; "humble before my Lord, but stronger than thou believest. Forgive me, Lord, if I boast of myself before thee," he added.

Ingram measured him with his eyes; the delicate figure of the youth, and the mild expression of the enthusiastic countenance moved his heart, and he said gently, "Much secret knowledge, as Bubbo, the bear-leader, also thinks, has become thy portion. I fear thou mightest use it for the advantage or for the injury of others."

"To be friendly to every one, and hurtful to no one, is the command of my Lord," replied Gottfried, solemnly.

"Such a command may well suit an all-seeing God," interposed Wolfram, who till then had done his best with the deer's flesh and beer, and was stretching himself now contentedly before the fire; "but on this man's earth it is difficult to travel through the forest with such teaching.

Believe me, stranger, in the country here we have also superhuman beings, who have just the same mind of which thou boastest in thy God. Dost thou see the projecting stone on the declivity of the hill?" he asked, in a low tone: "there dwells a race of good dwarfs, friendly little people; they have never been known to do evil to any one. But he who on his journey through the forest lays down for them some of his travelling provision has good luck on the road; and they have nodded at many a one, and offered him dry leaves and nuts; and these have become at night gold in his travelling-bag. If he whom thou servest is a dwarf, he may possibly be a good one, but there are also bad ones."

"There is much that is improper mixed in thy speech, Wolfram," replied the monk; "the Christian God does not bestow leaves and nuts, and he gives no gifts which preserve good fortune in the homes of men."

"Yet such protection is given on earth," said Ingram; "I know a man who bestowed upon his family a gift from the Weird Sisters; I know the place where it lies concealed, and I know that it has preserved a blessing to them through many generations."

"Oh, do not trust in magic!" admonished

Gottfried, eagerly. "Deceitful is every gift of the evil ones; they make man proud and insatiable, till the day comes when his hopes are shown to be all vain, and the Lord humbles him in his pride."

Ingram laughed. "Every one conceals in his secret heart what gives him courage. We will both, as good companions, refrain from asking where the other conceals his treasure. Dew is falling, and in the morning we ride on a wild path. Take this covering, and wrap it over thy limbs, that they may not become stiff in the night-air of the mountain. Awake me, Wolfram, after midnight."

On the following afternoon, the riders saw before them a portion of country without a tree. The stems had lately been cut down, and arranged on the border of the wood as a barricade, for the stumps were yet standing on the green ground, each one surrounded by young shoots and wild shrubs, and all over the ground rose low bushes. When the travellers, one after the other, had penetrated through a small gap in the barricade, they perceived before them several horsemen, who first kindled the alarm signal, from which a high cloud of smoke arose, and then, crying and swinging their weapons, came down upon them

from a gentle eminence—men in long grey coats, woven of hemp, and trimmed with fur, although it was summer-time; thick fur caps on their heads; and armed with clubs and curved horns; they had small active bodies, and broad faces with large mustachios, and brown smooth hair. They threatened, and called out wildly. Wolf-ram rode forward, and explained to them in their own tongue: “We are from Thuringia; we come in peace,—Ingram, the hero, and I, his man; and the third is Gottfried, a messenger of Herr Winfried.”

The horsemen then collected together, speaking with vehement gestures, till one of them, who wore on his fur cap a bunch of eagle’s feathers,—it was Slavnik, called the nightingale, because he sang before Ratiz at his drinking feasts,—rode up to Ingram, and greeted him politely in the Sorbe language. As the Thuringian answered the greeting in the same way, the Sorbe bowed himself in a still more friendly manner, and said, in as high and soft a tone as a maiden, the servant interpreting it, “That he was much rejoiced, but that the travellers must, according to boundary custom, wait for their escort.” So they stopped, and the Sorbes closed the barricade behind them.

"They are like children," exclaimed Ingram, "and their rampart is like child's play : a horse would easily go over it."

But the Sorbe had understood him, and answered in the German tongue, only awkwardly : "I remember a day when the Raven from the land of Thuringia did not fly over the fence which the iron of the Sorbes closed round him."

"Thou art right," answered Ingram, laughing ; "I fell into the fence, and the thorns scratched my body." Both men greeted one another again with the hand. The travellers waited a whole hour ; then there came, as a dark cloud from the height, a great troop of horsemen whirling pell-mell on small and fiery horses, on which the riders sat with knees drawn up. On all sides they surrounded the strangers ; the Nightingale gave a signal, and forward they went, trotting quickly along the short grass,—the strangers in the middle. A wide valley spread before them, studded with single old trees, under which the Sorbe warriors and their horses sought shade in the summer : in the valley there was erected a circular rampart of earth and turf ; within it was the round village of straw huts, the roofs of which descended almost to the ground ; it lay there like the encampment of an army host.

Quite in the middle of the village towered a round hill, again crowned by a circular rampart, which enclosed the hall of Ratiz and the huts of his household. His banner floated from a high pole, and waved towards the strangers. With heated face Ingram rode up to Gottfried. "By my head, if I do not bring out uninjured those whom we seek, I will not rest or repose till I see the burning tow on my arrow, and till the arrow is fixed on this mouse's nest."

"Do not be angry in this hour, my travelling companion, but pray that the Lord may be gracious to us."

The gate of the village was opened; the riders galloped through the lanes of the encampment, and over the open space at the foot of the hill. There, by the side of the village pond, squatted a heap of half-naked women and children, with pale faces and tangled hair. Ingram gave spurs to his horse, and galloped out of the troop to the water, but the Sorbe horsemen impeded him with angry mien, seizing their weapons.

"Bethink thee, my lord: he who seizes the wares before he has bought them, pays a dear price," said Wolfram, warningly, in a low voice. They went on farther, at a quick pace, up the hill. Again the bars of a gate were pushed

back, the horses clattered into the courtyard, and the strangers were led into the hall before Ratiz.

The Slave sat in the midst of his trusty friends, on a chair with a high back and side-arms, like a Prince; around him, on stools by the table, were the leaders of his bands; there were wild faces among them, with deep scars. The Chieftain was a powerful warrior, robust, with a short neck; his eyes were aslant in his broad face, his beard thin and bristly. The strangers bowed themselves, but Ratiz remained sitting with his retinue, and he moved his head almost imperceptibly.

"Ask the Cat," cried out Ingram, angrily, "whether it is the custom of his race to greet strangers thus."

The Sorbe signed to a man with long white beard, who was sitting in the circle. He approached the strangers, and began in the German tongue: "My master Ratiz greets the powerful lords, and makes this enquiry of them. He has been informed that one of them comes from the distant country where the great lord of the Franks sits on a golden chair: if one of these is from this land, let him name himself." The monk answered: "It is I, Gottfried, the messenger of Winfried, the Bishop."

The Slave looked astonished at the youth in unadorned dress. Ratiz, with frowning brow, spoke to his interpreter, who explained, "It appears to my lord that the powers of the Franks have shown him little respect in sending to him a messenger who is so young and so poorly clad."

"I am a Christian, vowed to the great God of Heaven; it would be a sin in me to wear anything but this hair dress. I come, although I am young, because my lord confides in me."

Again the Slave spoke eagerly to one of his companions, who disappeared out of the hall. "My lord asks thee," continued the interpreter, "whether thou art one of the wise men, who possess the secret of discovering the thoughts of others by the skin of an animal, and whether thou art one of those who understand the foreign language which they call Latin?"

"It is so," answered Gottfried.

On the explanation of the interpreter, the look of anger in the face of the Sorbe changed into one of great astonishment. The messenger came back, bringing a crumpled brown parchment. "My master Ratiz finds it difficult to believe that a youth like thee can have the mastery of such great things; he wishes that

thou shouldst give him a proof of thy skill, and proclaim the thoughts of men which, by those who have the knowledge, are to be discovered on this skin." Gottfried unfolded the parchment. "First, tell us why that which is recorded there is unintelligible to us."

"It is Latin," replied Gottfried, "and one must be able to read it."

Ratiz thumped his hand on the table, and nodded his head vehemently in confirmation. "Thou hast said right," repeated the man; "if it pleases thee, explain to us the Latin."

Gottfried looked over the scroll of parchment; it was a torn record of an old King of the Franks, which the Slaves had perhaps stolen in some plundering expedition. The monk began: "*In nomine Domini sanctæ et individuae trinitatis, Amen.*" When he bowed himself at the holy words, Ratiz thumped again on the table, and spoke solemnly to his companions, whereupon the old man explained: "My master is contented that thou hast confirmed what he already knows; it is a letter which the great lord of the Franks has written to my lord, one Prince to another, that he disapproves, and will make up for the injustice of his boundary Counts, and that thy lord offers friendship to

mine: we knew that this was contained in it, and therefore we rejoice at thy words." Thus did the sly robber brag, in order to deceive his companions. Before Gottfried could recover from his astonishment, Ratiz rose, stepped up to him, stroked him on both cheeks, as if he would kiss him, and ordered the servants to place a chair near his, that the monk might sit down. "My lord greets thee as the envoy of thy lord, and he begs that thou wouldst announce to him the message of the great lord of the Franks."

"I have little to say on the errand of my master, Winfried, the Bishop, and this little is perhaps only for the ear of my lord Ratiz," replied the monk, cautiously.

"Thou speakest wisely, Herr Gottfried; the secrets of thy lord are not for every one's ear; be satisfied to wait till the time comes."

When the old man offered a chair to the monk, Ingram approached the table, muttering, raised an empty stool, and placed it on the ground near to Ratiz, and seated himself likewise. The Sorbes bore this wilfulness silently; but now Ratiz turned to him, and the interpreter explained these proud words: "It surprises me, Ingraban, that thou placest thyself at my table, uninvited and unbefriended among

my people. Is a seat necessary to thee, because the wounds which have been made by the knives of my warriors are still painful?"

"The scratches are healed, and no one speaks any more of them," replied Ingram. "People do not extol a Host who compels a stranger to bring his own stool."

"Thou wast long the enemy of my people; no one knows what leads thee into our hall, for thou bringest no herds, as I hear, which the Sorbes have enjoined upon thy people as payment."

"In vain dost thou endeavour to wound me with thy words. Peace is sworn betwixt the Thuringians and thy people, and I come in peace, as the traders come, to barter for the prisoners which thou drovest here after thy last expedition."

"Does the man send thee whom they call Winfried the Bishop? and hast thou bowed thy head, in the hour of need, under the play of their fingers, when they sign the cross?"

"I have not renounced the faith of my fathers; as travelling companion I led the envoy of the foreign Bishop to thee."

The Sorbe made a sign to his companions, who all had it at heart to conclude the bargain

soon, preferring to surrender the prisoners to the Franks, whose hatred and revenge they would have less reason to fear, if the spoil was ransomed. "My warriors are not in haste to sell the gains of their chase; the camp is filled with corn and cattle from the Frank villages, and we can easily feed the prisoners till traders come from the south." Then turning to Gottfried, he continued, "Does the Bishop wish to buy a congregation out of the herds of women and children?"

"My Father begs of thee as a favour to allow me to see the prisoners, and to greet those who are of our faith."

"Do you carry with you what will ransom the prisoners? It appears to me that your travelling equipage is small."

"We think of offering thee what will release the prisoners, according to the custom of the boundary," replied Ingram. "But he who will buy must first behold the wares; show us, if it pleases thee, the imprisoned band."

The Sorbe reflected and spoke with his table-companions. Then he turned to Gottfried: "Gladly will I give thy master a proof that his message is valuable to me. You shall have liberty to see the prisoners. Go, strangers; my

old man will conduct you." The envoys bowed, and left the hall; they heard behind them the noise and laughter of the bench-companions.

When out of the door, Weissbart became confidential, like one who is free from constraint; he took his fur cap off, bowed himself low, and said persuasively, "When the ravens hunt, the crows also get their portion; when you, my lords, succeed in delivering the prisoners, I trust you will also bestow something on the little father; for difficult is my office to speak in two languages, and I may yet do you good service."

Gottfried looked uncertainly at his companion. "Is this your custom?" asked the latter. He loosened from his jacket the silver clasp, the only ornament that he wore. "Take this, father, as a token of good-will, and when Bubbo, the bear-dealer, visits you the next time, then I will send thee a piece of red cloth from the western country."

The old man held out his hand humbly. "Will Herr Ingram assure me of this?" And when Ingram laid his two fingers on the hilt of his sword, saying, "I swear it to thee," the old man laughed contentedly. "Your word, my lord, passes on the frontier like wares." They walked across the court; at the entrance the old man

called out to some loitering warriors, who immediately sprang up and followed the strangers on foot: but he, in order to show his zeal to serve them, commanded them to keep some paces back.

They descended from the hill to the village; there by the pond stood a long house, like a barn—the council-hall of the community. The old man opened the door, and Ingram sprang forward into the dusky room. “Walburg!” he cried out.

Two piteous voices said from a corner, “Here!” There was a movement on the hay, with which the ground was covered, and two blonde boys embraced Ingram’s feet, sobbing piteously.

“Where is your sister?” asked Ingram, in a hollow voice.

“She has been carried away to Ratiz’s house, on the hill.”

The man gnashed his teeth, and clenched his fist, but immediately afterwards threw himself on his knees by the children; he embraced them, and hot tears rolled down on the curly heads of the sobbing ones. But in the middle of the room, the solemn words sounded, “‘Come unto me, ye who are weary and heavy-laden,’ saith the Lord.” Through the open door the rays of light fell on the sweet countenance of the youth,

which shone radiant with sympathy and enthusiasm, like that of an angel.

The women and children who acknowledged the sign of the cross thronged about him; many fell on their faces sobbing at his feet, others raised the little children up on high, that he might bless them. The heathen women also listened to his words with bowed heads and folded hands. He spoke the holy words of the Gospel, and prayed with a loud voice; all was still in the room, nothing was heard but the sighing of women and the low weeping of children. Then he stepped up to each individual with a greeting, blessed each mother with the Christian blessing, and spoke in a low tone the petition for that which lay most at their hearts. At last the old man came, and with his hat drawn off, begged urgently, "If it please thee, my lord, follow me, that Herr Ratiz may not be angry with us."

Gottfried went to Ingram, and touched him gently on the shoulder. "Where is the woman whom thou seekest?"

"In the hut of the robber," was the almost soundless answer.

"Then let us go, that she also may have the greeting of my God."

With a great effort Ingram rose, and shook off the weeping boys. Gottfried led these up to a Christian woman, who was kneeling alone, and said to her, "What thou doest to these thou doest to the Lord; care for their welfare." But when he turned to go out, the despairing crowd pressed about him; they stretched their arms out towards him, laid hold of his dress convulsively, and wished to hold him fast. In vain did the old man order the poor creatures away; he had at last to drive them back with the whip.

With rapid steps the men hastened up the hill. "I must speak to the Christian maiden in the house of Ratiz," said Gottfried, firmly, and when the old man shook his head, "Do not hinder me, father; I am commanded to do it."

"I should risk the anger of my lord," replied the white-headed Sorbe.

"I will double thy pay," cried out Ingram hoarsely. "Dost thou think we will steal the woman out of the hut?"

The old man smiled and nodded, and led them along the border of the hill, to where, protected by a rampart, a number of low straw houses stood. "Herr Ratiz has twenty women, and with one of them the foreign woman dwells; it is possible that in a short time he may build her a

new hut, if she does not make herself disagreeable to him."

Ingram pushed the door open, but his foot hesitated to enter. "Go forward!" he whispered to the monk.

But out of the chamber a deep woman's voice called out to him, "Ingram!" A young woman stepped towards him, and passing the priest, seized the hand of the hesitating one. "My heart told me that I should see thee, for thy heart has been ever true to our house." And when she observed his fixed looks, and the sorrow in his face, she exclaimed, "Thou fool! would I in that case have spoken to thee?" Then he wished to clasp her in his arms, but she eluded him. "If thou hadst stood beside my father, the willow swathes would not have bound us. And now I see thee before me otherwise than I expected. Where are the spears of thy countrymen, which the wives and children of thy kindred call for? Not me, I mean, for I fear my days are counted; but I mean the brothers, the crowd of weeping ones who abide on the straw, till the slave traders carry them into foreign countries."

"I come with this man to treat about the ransom," answered Ingram, pointing to the monk.

The woman looked with astonishment at the

face of the foreign youth, and when Gottfried raised his hand to make the holy sign, she bent herself slowly down till she knelt on the ground, and spoke the confession of the Christian faith. "Bless me, holy man, and pray for me. Yes, pray for me!" she cried, with a sudden outburst of bitter sorrow, "that I may find mercy, if I do what displeases the Lord. I have prayed and prepared myself, as my brother has taught me."

Gottfried blessed her. "'I alone am the Judge,' saith the Lord, 'and vengeance is Mine,'" he said, gently admonishing her.

She rose silently, and turned to Ingram. "Seldom does my keeper leave me; already I hear her quarrelling without with Weissbart. Farewell, Ingram! we both hope for deliverance through thee or me. Thou hast been an honourable friend; think of me in the future, and know, that if I have sometimes concealed it, I would rather see thee come than go. Wilt thou do me one more service of friendship? It is toilsome to cleave firewood for the hearth, if there is no knife, the women here have taken everything from me. It is said, that a friend should not give a friend anything that cuts. But do thou give me what thou wilt."

Ingram tore his knife out of his girdle, and

gave it her; she concealed it in her dress, and kissed him on the brow, as one kisses a beloved child at parting. He sprang out where the monk was waiting for him; pushed against Ratiz's woman, whom he did not see, nor heard the abuse which she called out after him. All human speech was to him now like the chirping of birds.

Whilst they were going to the hall in the middle of the court, Gottfried touched his arm. "Thou art beside thyself, and dost not hear my words; and yet it is necessary that we should prepare for the purchase. Think thereon, how I may offer the ransom."

"By my head," exclaimed Ingram, "all ransom is hateful to me without one thing; and that is, that I may fight the robber iron against iron."

"Yet I hold for thee the friendly ransom, the goblet."

"Better will the magic of the Christian God work in thy hand than mine," answered Ingram, gloomily; "for it appears to me that it opens all hearts to thee—that all honour thee more than a warrior."

They entered into the hall, and Ratiz called out to them impatiently, "It seems to have been difficult for you to count the prisoners; the pole-

cat is troublesome in the poultry-yard, now it is necessary for you to buy, if you come in truth as dealers, and not as spies."

"I come as a messenger to thee," replied Gottfried, "as thou knowest; for thou thyself didst beg for a message from my lord, the Bishop, through Meginhard, the priest. And Herr Winfried said, as I departed: It does not become me to bargain for the ransom as a trader with the Hero Ratiz. But I will offer him a King's gift in exchange for the prisoners of his last expedition, and my-good will, if he desires it, in return for his—gift and counter-gift in friendly exchange. And Hero Ingram shall be the messenger of the gift." Gottfried drew the case out of his white dress, and loosened the cover.

Ingram had gradually taken an interest in the conversation; now he approached the monk, and said quickly, "Do not give it out of thy hand: he who sells the bird must hold him fast, that he may not fly away." He seized the goblet, and held it up to the Sorbe. "See how this splendid piece from a King's treasury will look by thy mead-cup." The Sorbe could not restrain a loud expression of pleasure, when he saw the shining metal and the figures; his companions also thronged round the goblet, head to head,

humming in one another's ears and laughing at the little figures upon it. "Worthy of honour is Winfried, the Bishop, for sending me such a gift!" exclaimed Ratiz; "allow me, Herr Ingram, to try how heavy it is."

"My hand remains upon it, Sorbe," said Ingram; "the goblet is still mine."

"It is still thine," repeated Ratiz, reflectively, waving his hand. He called the interpreter with the white beard. The latter took off his hat respectfully before the goblet, inspected it under Ingram's hand, and touched it with his moist tongue inside and out, took his knife out, made an incision on the edge and examined the scratch; then he spoke in a low tone to his master.

"And this is the condition for the gift of the Bishop," continued Ingram: "thou must give into our hands, uninjured, Walburg, the daughter of Willihalm, the Frank whom thou didst slay, with her two brothers; also, the other prisoners of your last raid, from the eldest to the youngest; besides, Goldfeder, Willihalm's horse, and two oxen as travelling food for the released."

At the name of Walburg the Sorbe started, yet he controlled his displeasure, looked searchingly at his companions, and said, "Very rare is the silver from the King's treasury which you

have shown us, but it is only gold inside. If it pleases you, ye Franks, leave the hall for a short time, that we may take counsel quietly."

Gottfried remarked that he looked coldly on the goblet, which Ingram held up high in the sight of the Sorbe. The Thuringians replaced the goblet in the case, and the messengers went out.

"Now they are devising some fraud," said Ingram.

"They are afraid of my lord Winfried," replied the monk, quietly. "I applaud thee for having asked for the cattle, for it would be difficult to feed thirty-one persons among the mountains; but why didst thou demand the horse?"

"Thou askest, truly, as an unwarlike man. Dost thou hope that Willihalm will find rest in the grave that thou hast scooped out for him, if a Sorbe rides on his own horse: must he wander on foot over the cloud-path, and when the heroes ride in the night, run behind them like a soldier's boy?"

Gottfried crossed himself. "In the Christian's heaven there is no need of a horse's spirit."

"He was a warrior, if he was also a Christian," replied Ingram, proudly. "But what does the Slave want from the favour of the Bishop?"

"Perhaps he wishes to become the boundary

Count of Franconia, and to build his castle over the Sorbe village," replied Gottfried, laughing.

Ingram uttered a curse. "And thou wouldst like to help him to that?"

"Thou knowest that he has slain and plundered Christians," answered Gottfried.

In the hall there was a long consultation, and vehement quarrelling among the men. At last Weissbart invited the strangers to re-enter. Again Ingram raised the goblet, but the Sorbe turned his looks away. Ratiz began: "Disproportionate are the gifts which you demand for your Bishop; but my nobles will return gift for gift, without valuing them much. You shall take the prisoners who are not yet apportioned, and besides, a three-year-old ox from good pasture. Only two things we refuse you—Walburg, and Goldfeder, the cream-coloured horse. The maiden is a gift of honour of my people to me; and the horse is in the stall of the Hero Slavnik, who is next to me in honours and battle fame. You have chosen your present, and we offer ours as we choose."

"Herr Winfried has buried with his own hands the body of the Frank Willihalm, and vowed upon his grave to take care of the children," answered Gottfried: "bethink thee, my lord; thou wouldst

not show him a friendly feeling, if thou didst keep back a Christian woman."

"It was only on account of the woman that I took the goblet from the stranger, and consented to conduct the messenger; and above all I seek the woman from thee," exclaimed Ingram, angrily.

"Therefore thou hast penetrated into the house of my women," replied the Sorbe, suspiciously. "Listen to my last words: the boys I will send to the Bishop; the woman remains mine. If thou opposest the exchange, then take thyself away with the goblet; too long hast thou tarried in our encampment; and take care that thou carriest it homewards in good preservation. Thou art come without escort, and without escort thou must depart."

"Dost thou think of a secret attack in the forest? Do the Sorbes fear a fight on the open field?" cried out Ingram. "Here I stand, thou crafty man, and offer to fight for the woman against each of thy warriors—nay, against two. Place against Ingraban and the Raven two of the best warriors on the strongest Sorbe horses, and the Gods will decide the victory."

On this challenge the Sorbe warriors sprang from their benches, and their cries sounded through the hall, but the Chieftain compelled

them, by a movement of his hand, to return to their seats, and replied, "Many extol the strength of thine arm, but I cannot quite applaud the sense of thy speech. Foolish were I to send my warriors on to the fighting-field, in order to gain what I have already won by spear and horse. And little honour would it be to my heroes to fight in the ring for a cowering slave. Another fight I offer thee, which is better suited to peace. I hear that thou art well versed in the drinking-cup, as beseems a man ; to me also it is not easy to find an opponent with the drinking-mug. Come, let us try our strength : thou pledgest thy horse the Raven, and I the Frank woman ; the conqueror shall receive both. That appears to me good counsel."

Loud cries of approbation sounded round the table ; only Ingram stood confounded. "The horse belongs to the man like the sword, and unfriendly would some day be the greeting of my ancestors if I delivered the care of my horse into a Sorbe village. That I much fear ; yet I will pledge to thee two steeds of the race of the Raven, of five and four years old, nobler than any of thy horses. Only my battle-horse, which has been my best friend, when no arm of man helped me, do I keep back from thee."

“Unknown are the prizes which thou offerest me, and far is the way to thy stalls. The Raven and the prisoner are both here in the courtyard ; that is a just wager.”

Ingram stood in vehement struggle.

“Come on ; by the Weird Sisters of my race, bring hither the cups, and the struggle shall begin.”

Again the joyful noise of the Sorbes resounded ; it sounded in Gottfried’s ear like the cry of devils. “Wicked is the game of the cups for a human life,” he cried out, interposing.

Ratiz nodded politely, waving him away. But Ingram replied, ill-temperedly, “Little luck has the silver of thy Bishop brought me ; away from me, that I may pray to my God whether he will help me.”

The old man brought a large jug of mead, and two cups, both alike, made of maple wood. He showed the filled jug and the empty cups to the antagonists ; who looked earnestly in, and examined the vessels. After that, Weissbart filled one cup up to the line which marked the brim, poured the mead from the first into the second, in order to show the size, and placed two similar stools without backs at the table. The Heroes seized the cups, and turned themselves back

towards the region of the heavens, before which they prayed to the Gods, and murmured in a low voice the fortune-bringing song. Then they loosened their weapons from their hips; the Slave gave his curved sword to a comrade, but Ingram exclaimed, "I am alone in a foreign country; ask, old man, whether there is one among the Sorbe warriors who would be a trusty sword-bearer to me till the end of the struggle."

Gottfried made a movement, but Ingram motioned him away with his hand; and the monk drew back, with heightened colour. Then a young Sorbe warrior of proud aspect rose. Ingram looked in his face, and said, "We have seen each other truly on bloody fields, Hero Miros." The warrior vowed to be a true sword-guardian, and placed himself on one side, behind Ingram, holding the sword. The antagonists set themselves down upon their chairs; quiet were their movements, and measured their bearing; for any one who had his mind excited was in danger in this game. Weissbart cried aloud, "Except those who sit on the fighting-chairs, let every one be silent, that his speech may not confuse the minds of the drinkers. But it befits the Chiefs in their fighting-talk to remember that every

wound which their tongue makes must be borne with patience the following morning. After that the interpreter seated himself on a low stool between the two, and repeated what each one said skilfully in the language of the other. So soft and dexterous was the interpreted talk, that it sounded like a song betwixt the hard words of the antagonists.

Ratiz first took his cup, raised it, and said: "I, Ratiz, son of Kadun, a Chief among the Sorbes, raise my cup of mead in equal combat."

From the other side there sounded back: "I, Ingram, son of Ingbert, a free Thuringian, pledge myself."

Both emptied the cups, and then placed them down forcibly on the table. The old man filled them again, bowing low before each of the Chiefs. Again Ratiz began: "Black is the bird, after which, as I hear, thou art called; but white is the eagle which soars over the tents of my warriors. I saw a roe lying by the spring in the wood, and an eagle was feeding on it with strong claws; but in the circle around a host of ravens croaked and watched for the remains."

Ingram answered: "The Hero's name was devised for him by his dear parents, and unwillingly does he hear it reviled. I know not

how to indicate thine, for I have seldom enquired about thy family, yet I advise thee to avoid the use of it among my people, for it sounds to us like a rat, the thievish animal behind the flour-sack."

"You do not understand the words of the Sorbe warriors, but their blows you have often felt."

"Five coats-of-mail with linen, and five curved swords, the booty of the battle-field, I count on the walls of my hall: dost thou think that thy warriors would willingly offer them without a blow?"

"Many a one sneaks, spying by moonlight, over the field of battle; coming behind wolves, he seeks for booty, and, pale and trembling, carries off to his chimney-side the possessions of slain heroes," replied Ratiz.

"If it is painful to thee to count the fallen whom my sword has left on the turf, yet thou mayest count the wounds of those who live. More than one of thy warriors boasts of the scars for which he has to thank me."

"They have all reason to praise thy sword," said Ratiz, mockingly, "for the scratches are easily healed, and they laugh at the scars."

"Speedy runners are lightly hit by the stroke of the sword; only he who himself gives strong

INGRABAN.

blows receives the like guest-present," replied Ingram.

"Thou speakest well, Hero," cried Ratiz, "for thou thyself concealest near thy heart the guest-present with which Sorbe swords have struck thee." He made a sign; they drank, and cast down the cups.

Again the old man refilled them, and Ratiz began more politely, "It is in vain to irritate thee, Hero, by hard words. The mead-cup is now filled, and it is time for friendly speech. Let us declare what to each is dearest on earth. What pleases me above all is a Chieftain's seat on the hill, the huts of warriors round me, and before me, as far as my eyes can reach, cattle-pastures which my sword has won."

"What the sword has won the sword may lose; farther than the herds of cattle wander and the boundary-marks project, reaches the fame of a valiant man," replied Ingram.

"He gains fame who gains land," exclaimed Ratiz.

"He gains fame also who defends his home against foreign invaders," answered Ingram. "Unequal is our lot. I stand on the inheritance of my fathers, but thou occupiest thyself with stolen land."

"Higher do I esteem the wild bull, which roams with his herd over the earth, than the yoked cow in the pen," cried out Ratiz.

"Long as the memory of the wise have my race sat on a free inheritance. But thou camest from the East, from a foreign land, and no one knows from whence."

"My people know it," replied the Sorbe, proudly; "yet I do not blame thy pride, for thy name is well known to friend and foe. If it pleases thee, Hero, tell us the adventures which thou hast gone through." He begged this in order to awaken in the other the desire to talk.

But Ingram avoided the temptation, and replied, "What I have passed through thou knowest as well as I; for my young life was fixed always in my home, and if I have gained fame amongst my people, it was only in fight with thee, because I stood firm by my friends, and against thee as an honourable enemy."

Again the old man filled the cups.

"Often have my warriors extolled," began Ratiz, mockingly, "thy first booty expedition in the forest, when thou, like a fox, didst sneak in the wood after honeycombs. Thou didst hear the bears, and didst creep up into the branches; the bears feasted below on the honey, but the bees

stung thee where thou didst sit; and still wouldst thou be hanging, stung by the spears of the bees, on the branches, if Bubbo, the forest-man, had not released thee."

"On that account the skins of the bears lie now on my hearth," replied Ingram, laughing. "How did thy hero expedition prosper with thee, Ratiz, when thou didst go out wooing, in order to gain a woman of Thuringia? The village boys fell upon the place in which thou didst encamp, and when they searched through the huts with their swords, thy troop fled, but thou didst conceal thyself, pressed into the kneading-trough which the woman cast over thee, and the dough hung in thy beard, as thou didst run away without thy sword. Gladly do our maidens tell by our hearth of thy hard bed under the hollow wood."

Ratiz laid hold of his cup gloomily, and stamped it on the table. "More useful to me was the successful escape than the fruitless search to thy companions." In silence for a time he repressed his anger, then called out scornfully, "Hear, then, what Wila, the Weird Sister of the Sorbes, once sang to me." And he began to sing: "'All will be prosperous with thee on the field and at the drinking-cup, but thou shalt

have the greatest pleasure when a foreign unarmed giant shall come into thy encampment. Rude will be his words and demeanour; he will come as a poor starving wretch, uninvited, and he will beg of thee a woman for his hearth-seat. Yet thou shalt receive him well, and invite him politely to the drinking-cup; but small is his skull—he cannot carry anything strong. When thou hast intoxicated him with mead, bind his legs cleverly with ropes, shave the hair from his head, and place him before the door of the hall, that the women may laugh at him and the children throw dirt upon him.’”

Ingram replied angrily, “But I heard a tradition related of Tom Thumb, the famous Hero, whom they called Cockscomb. He hollowed with his own hands his Castle in the sand-heaps, and covered the strong place with straw which he pilfered from the threshing-floor. He looked from his halls over the molehills, and boasted, ‘All is mine, as far as my eye reaches; no more stately Hero do I know upon earth; only one thing is wanting for my happiness: I will send a messenger to the Court of the King, that I may become Duke over the moles and mice of the fields.’ Then came a peasant, and with a hard foot inadvertently crushed the Castle and

Hero. Tom Thumb fled into a rat-hole, wringing his hands with sorrow."

The Sorbe put his hand to his sword side, and groped eagerly about, but he could not find the weapon; and Ingram laughed aloud at the vain search.

Again and again the old man filled the cups. The eyes of Ratiz began to swim, and his hand became unsteady when he laid hold of the cup. He observed his danger, and thought slyly of something that would annoy his opponent. "We sit merrily here in a fight of tongues, but the mead will be more pleasantly sipped if we behold with our eyes the woman who will be the prize of the conqueror. Bring the Frank woman here, that we may enjoy the sight of her." Two of his comrades sprang up, and hastened to the door.

Ingram struck his hand on the table. "Unfairly dost thou disturb the game; for it will be sorrowful to me to behold the daughter of a worthy man as a slave among strangers."

"But if thou wilt deliver her, thou powerful drinker, and hast strength, show it now. Do not put the willow swathes round her hands, that the guest may see her without vexation of soul."

Ingram looked gloomily down, and his head became heavy. The men came up, leading the

maiden into the silent hall. Walburg remained standing at the door, and her countenance clouded when she looked upon Ingram—on the drinkers, and the two cups.

“Draw near, child of the Frank,” began Ratiz, “for the quarrel is about thee; the Gods are to decide, without the sword-fight of the Heroes. In maple wood will we decide thy lot, whether thou goest home with the Hero Ingram, or whether I build a hut for thee, and spread a bed for thee and me, as I hope.”

The maiden turned agitated to the Thuringian. “I have chosen a better helper for myself; deliverance through the drinking-cup would be disgraceful to me. Do not think, Ingram, of gaining a wife through mead:—practise thy heathen customs for the Sorbe maidens, not for me.” She turned her back to him, stepped into the corner in which Gottfried sat, knelt down by his side, and concealed her face in her hands. A hot flush rose in the face of Ingram, when the woman turned contemptuously from him; he observed indistinctly the mocking laugh of the Selaves; he rose from his chair, and cried out with an outbreak of anger, “False was the game, and cursed be the cup with which I have been drinking!” He hurled the cup on to the ground,

and at the same moment he himself fell heavily down. A wild cry of jubilee resounded through the hall from the Sorbes ; his seconder, who held his sword, approached him, and exclaimed, " Carry him under my roof, that I may show him my faithfulness, and guard him with his weapon."

But Ratiz rose victorious, in drunken mood, and stepped up to the maiden. " Thou art mine ; thy round cheeks are doubly won, and mine thou shalt remain ; do not think of delaying our marriage. Lead her to the huts, and invite the minstrel, that he may play the bridal song."

Straight before him rose the maiden from her knees ; pale was her countenance, and hard the look which she cast upon the Chieftain. " No one could save thee from my hand," she exclaimed. " Thou monster ! thou hast killed the father, and now wilt bring dishonour on the daughter. Thank thy good fortune that a holy man is standing near me. Thou praisest my smooth cheeks ; see here whether they will please thee." Quick as lightning she drew the knife out of her dress, held it towards him, so that he drew back, cut herself with the steel—a gaping wound on her cheek, so that her blood streamed down, and again raised the steel against herself. Then Gottfried sprang forward, and tore the weapon

from her. Ratiz gave vent to a loud oath, and caught hold of the mead-cup to throw it against the woman; but he also tottered and fell to the ground, overpowered with drink and rage. The Sorbes collected round their Chieftain, and Gottfried led, with the help of Weissbart, the wounded maiden to her hut: there he endeavoured to stop the flowing blood, and with the assistance of the Sorbe women, to bind the gaping wound.

Late on the following morning Ingram was sitting in the hut of Miros, his head resting on his hand, and his thoughts in wild confusion. On his lap he held the sword which his guest-friend had put back again into his hand. Miros stood before him, telling him of the last result of the drinking-bout, and of the wound of the woman. "She would have cut the threads of her life, for her mind was excited, when the foreign messenger dragged the knife from her. Useless was the trouble: the knife would have been more glorious for her than the club of Ratiz."

Ingram started, and grasped his sword.

"What wouldst thou do, if an imprisoned woman threatened thee with a knife?" asked Miros.

Ingram nodded his head, assentingly. "If she were dead by a glorious deed, accomplished

by herself, and if Ratiz were slain by my sword, then I should become free, and laugh," he murmured. "But now I am oppressed by the magic which the impious Christian men, by their song and by their silver, have thrown upon my path. Therefore did the God, who rules powerfully over the drinking-horn, refuse me his help. He also was defied by the miracles of the giants, and he had to fight an inglorious fight. My life is insufferable to me, and I care little to return home."

"Remain with us," advised the Sorbe, sympathizingly, "and accustom thyself to our practices; then Herr Ratiz will build thee a hut, and if thou still desirest the woman with the torn cheek, it is possible that he may give her to thee, that she may turn thy millstone."

Ingram laughed. "Could you forget that I have slain your warriors? and would my sword spring out of its scabbard, if it hung next to a Sorbe club? How can there be peace betwixt thee and me? No, Miros; the Weird Sisters advise me otherwise. And dost thou think that he will kill her?"

"How can he do otherwise?"

"Then tell him that I challenge him to a fight on the heath betwixt your boundary and ours, in six days from now."

"Give him such a message thyself, if thou desirest to depart from the light of day; thou also art in his hands, and if he releases thee, he knows that a deadly enemy rides free from him. Think above all of thine own safety!"

"Thou speakest sensibly. I will go peaceably from you, or not at all. The Gods may cast for me. In the art of drinking thy lord is powerful, as I see; let him try whether he understands the game of the dice—his fate against mine. Go, my Host, and carry him a message, which he must accept or not as he pleases. Once more let us measure ourselves in peaceful fight, for all or nothing—as the dice fall guided by our hands; let him stake on the game, the woman and my horse that he yesterday won, and I——"

"And thou?"

"Myself, whether I ride freely away, or remain here his prisoner till good treasure may be collected, which will deliver me according to the custom of the boundary."

The Sorbe stepped back; he opened his shirt and pointed to a scar. "Thou knowest who gave me this blow; think of it, Hero; it would be inglorious to me to say that a servant gave the wound."

Ingram held out his hand to him. "Yet go,

foreigner; I am deeply ensnared, and mine hour is come, when I must ask the high powers whether they will preserve or destroy me."

The Sorbe went out reluctantly; Ingram laid his head on the table. "Since the stranger dragged up the millstone from under the tree, good fortune has left me, and the blessing which my ancestors left behind has lost its power. She has turned angrily away from me; but I will try whether I have still the power to win her by my conjuration, or I will partake her lot."

Outside sounded the tread of armed men. Ratiz entered, accompanied by a portion of his warriors.. His eyes were still sunk in his head, and his voice was hoarse, as he said, "Thou comest as an eager gambler. The first fight I proposed; the second thou offerest. Truly thou esteemest thyself highly: I would rather have the woman and the horse than thee, and unwillingly do I consent to thy wishes. But my warriors demand that I shall not reject thy game. Thy stake is the horse and woman for thee, or thou for me, one die and one throw."

"The woman and horse, both uninjured, on the spot for me, or my ransom for thee, as thy warriors may honourably value it," replied Ingram.

"We shall honour thee as a warrior, when thou art valued for me," assented the Chieftain. "We will both of us make the vow." The men laid hold of their swords, and spoke the oath. "Hast thou a man," continued Ratiz, "whose dice thou canst trust, as I trust him? if so, name him."

"My Host Miros," answered Ingram.

Miros stepped into a corner of the hut, fetched a die out of a chest, and placed it on the table, and a wooden cup beside it. "Honourable is the die, and honourable is the game," said Miros, "and let every one who stands here swear to the conqueror that it shall be faithfully fulfilled."

The men took the oath; the contending parties stepped on one side, and spoke in a low tone their charm. "Let him who has demanded the game have the first throw," commanded Miros. He laid the die in the cup, and offered it to Ingram. The countenance of the Thuringian was pale, and equally so that of Ratiz. There was stillness in the hut, and all fixed their eyes on the table. Ingram shook the cup, and threw. "Five," called out Miros.

"A good throw!" said Ratiz. He took the cup, shook it, and threw. "Six," called out Miros. A yelling cry of victory resounded in

the hut, and far over the valley; all stepped back from Ingram. He stood for a moment with bent head, then he loosened his sword, and threw it on the ground. Ratiz laid his hand on him. "Thou art my servant. Fetch the willow swathes, and bind his hands."

Before the hut of Ratiz in which Walburg was lying, sat the monk; in front of him wild fellows bustled about with horses which they had brought from the stalls, and distinguished Sorbe warriors hastened singly or in small bands to the hall of the Chieftain. But the monk looked indifferently on the strange proceeding of these warriors; he had watched during the night before the hut; sometimes he had entered, and had awoke the Slave woman who lay beside the bed of the wounded one, that she might clean the wounds with cold water; or he had handed drink to the feverish one, and prayed in a low tone by her head. Now his exhausted body trembled in the warm morning sun, but his thoughts flew incessantly to the Christian maiden in the hut. For the first time in his life he had to take care of a woman; and he felt a rapturous joy, smiled to himself, and then again looked seriously and humbly up on high.

Close by he heard the clang of iron, and rapid

footsteps. Ratiz stood before him, with his followers in arms, prepared for an expedition; among the warriors, was Ingram, without weapons and with bent head, his arms bound by strong swathes to his back. Ratiz pointed up to the sun. "Far is thy way, young messenger, and thy appearance is repugnant to my people. The game which began in my hall is ended. The Gods have granted me victory and glory. Yet will I adhere to what I offered thee yesterday, if thou wilt report well of me to thy Bishop. Give me the silver, and take the prisoners."

"Wilt thou now hear the answer of the Bishop to thy question?"

"Speak," answered Ratiz; "I and my nobles listen to thee."

"Thou desirest to send envoys to the West country, to the court of the Hero Karl, and thou desirest that my lord, the Bishop, should obtain for them a safe conduct and a becoming reception by the Frank ruler. If I have told thy wishes correctly, confirm it to me before these."

"Every day has its own cares," replied the Sorbe; "for many months I have not thought on the mission; my warriors do not fear the power of the Franks. Where are their armies?—we do not see them."

"If thou hast changed thy mind, I am dispensed from further speech."

He stepped aside, but Ratiz began, again returning to the subject, "Thou weighest thy words in a sharp balance, stranger; it is still possible that it may please me to send messengers, but perhaps not."

Gottfried was silent.

"Will the man whom they call Winfried be surety to me that my warriors shall find a friendly reception at the court of the Frank Ruler, and the performance of their demands?"

"No," replied Gottfried, emphatically. "My master does not know thy demands, how then can he be intercessor? To grant and to refuse rests alone with Prince Karl; he can only help thy messengers to obtain the ear of the Prince, and whether he can help to do this rests with thee. On his way he saw burning houses and slain Christians."

"Thou art a stranger, and unacquainted with border customs," answered the Sorbe, with a look askance; "we only exercise necessary self-defence and reprisals. Some of our warriors also lie slain, and the outrages of the Franks are insupportable."

"Thou complainest of the injuries of the

Franks; the Franks also complain of thine: the great God of heaven alone knows which has committed the greatest outrages. But now thou seekest the ear of the Frank Prince. How can Herr Karl judge otherwise than his people? And thou seekest the good opinion of a Bishop of Christ, but Christ sees the injury that is done to the confessors of His faith. I cannot go, Chieftain, without the woman in the hut, and without my companion, whom I see swordless and bound."

"He was thy companion; now he is my own servant. It was his own doing: the madman played away his horse and his sword, and in bonds he now awaits the fate that we destine for him."

A low sigh was heard from Ingram—the sound passed trembling into the morning air; but from the hut was heard the loud cry of a woman. Ratiz said commandingly to the bound man, "Speak, servant, that the man who sent thee may not on thy account go from our agreement." Ingram turned away, but he bent his head assentingly.

"Care for him and the woman lies on my soul," exclaimed Gottfried: "how shall I appear before the face of him who sent me to thee, if I do not bring them to him?"

"Have I not before this released one of

thy Bishop's men without ransom?" retorted Ratiz, angrily, "and thou also standest uninjured before me. Dost thou not know, thou fool, if I raise my hand, my warriors will spring upon thee and peel thy shorn head with their knives?"

"My fate does not rest in thy hand, but in the hand of my God," replied Gottfried, boldly. "Do what thou darest; bind me, kill me, if thy savage mind incites thee to do so; but I do not leave this height willingly without the prisoners."

Ratiz gave vent to a curse, and stamped his foot. "Then my warriors shall take thee to my boundary fence and throw thee over, thou stiff-necked fool."

"Let them go free, and keep me back as thy servant or thy victim, as thou wilt."

"Foolish would be the exchange,—a young woman and a warrior for thee, who art neither man nor woman."

Gottfried turned pale, but accustomed by strong discipline to control himself, he answered, "Dost thou despise the messenger? yet hear for thine own sake the message. The victorious Frank Prince, with a great army of his people, is drawing near against his enemies; he is already encamped not far from the Werra; he has sent a new Count into the land of Thuringia to guard

the frontier. If in truth thou seekest reconciliation and peace with the Frank Prince, thou must hasten to send thy envoys to his camp."

Ratiz stood confounded, and spoke eagerly to Weissbart, who had interpreted the quick questions of the Sorbe and the answers of the monk. As Ratiz stepped aside, and communed with his warriors in a low tone, Gottfried approached Ingram. "Why art thou angry with me, poor man? Turn not thyself away from me, for my intentions are faithful."

Ingram looked gloomily at him, but his voice sounded soft as he answered, "Thou hast brought me misfortune; thou hast excited an angry spirit in me. I do not desire thy help; and all that thou endeavourest to do for me is fruitless. Release the woman, and tell her, if thou wilt, that I would rather have released her myself. Never canst thou alter my fate. I have, like a madman, delivered myself to a faithless people; for the look of the Sorbe and the joy of his followers foretells evil to me. See to it that thou send me my man, Wolfram, for they are preparing to value me; that I may instruct him, before your departure, if they deal honestly by me. And if they behave as miscreants, still tell the woman and my friends at home that the swathes of the

Sorbes will only bind me as long as I choose. Before they compel me to servants' work, I will win a bloody token on head or breast, in order that I may soar upwards and my ancestors may acknowledge me. But do thou wander on thy path away from me; I can well seek mine alone."

The monk stepped back; tears flowed from his eyes, as he said within himself, "Forgive him, Lord, and have mercy on him!"

The council of the Sorbes came to an end. Ratiz spoke with dark mien to Gottfried. "In order that thy master may know that my warriors are high-minded, take the woman with the torn cheek with thee on thy way. Thou hast great reason, youth, to praise my good disposition; ride away with the prisoners, and leave the Bishop's cup behind. Speak no further word!" he continued, with an outbreak of anger; "I pay a dear gift for thy journey. Go away, and tell thy Bishop I expect like faith from him when my messengers come to him. He turned away with a proud greeting, and gave a sign to his followers. Weissbart and Miros remained behind, the others collected round Ingram. Without looking round him, the latter turned his back to the hut, and the monk looked after him, till his tall figure disappeared into the hall among the Sorbe warriors.

IV.

THE RETURN HOME.

A WEAPONLESS host moved slowly along the border-path which led to the forest mountains. Foremost went a slender boy, carrying a wooden cross, which he had put together with two sticks; behind him Gottfried led the troops of children. The golden hair of the little ones fluttered in the morning air; barefooted they stepped forward, with rosy cheeks, and eyes blue as the sky. The larks flew over them, and by their side the bees and butterflies flitted; all the wayside flowers and grasses of the valley rose and bent their heads in the wind, incessantly greeting them. Behind the children came the women, followers of the cross, half-naked figures, with heads bowed down and worn faces; many of them bore on their shoulders a little child. In the middle of them was Walburg, sitting on the Priest's horse, her countenance thickly veiled. The monk began a Latin hymn,

the song sounded solemnly in the wild country, the women and children pressed on closer, and sang every strophe, at the end bowing deeply at the holy Kyrie Eleison, for they could not do more ; but it came from moved hearts, and they often wrung their folded hands. Behind the Christians came unwillingly the cow, the treasure of the band, which Miros had compassionately given to them on their departure. The animal separated the Christians from the heathens, and with it ran the heathen women and children ; one of them, Gertrude—a maiden with high tucked-up skirt,—held the cord on the left side of the cow, and carried the stick. But the heathen children did not remain on the path, but ran wildly about, seeking for roots in the meadows, and berries and mushrooms in the woods. Last of all came Wolfram, riding, who had left the encampment of Ratiz later than the others ; he frightened the loiterers onward, and trotted by the side of the train up to the heights, in order to make a survey.

“I praise thy skill in keeping these barefooted people together,” he began to the monk ; “thou wilt still have need of it. Three days thou wilt have to travel at children’s pace through the mountain wilderness, and when thou comest to

the first houses of the country people, thou wilt find a cold reception."

"I trust in thy help," replied Gottfried, looking at the good-humoured face.

Wolfram cleared his throat. "There is one left behind me; and the skin is nearer to me than the shirt."

"Wilt thou go back to the Sorbes, and leave these behind in the forest?" asked Gottfried, terrified.

The man did not answer the question. "He was always rash and incautious," he said, "and yet there was no one that could conquer him at the mead-jug; he fell unsuspectingly to a deceiver. The cup of Ratiz has a secret; the Sorbes were telling it by the fireside, and laughing. When the juggler presses his finger on the cup, the mead runs into a hollow, and when the cup-bearer presses it again, the concealed drink runs back into the cup. The one drinks only the half, the other the whole. These dirty dwarfs are full of tricks, and by tricks they have overpowered him. Lost by the cup, lost by the dice, and bound with swathes,—that is too much for him. He must strike many a blow before he can recover his pride; therefore I will go to him. As he played, I will play also, to deliver him or to follow him;

for it is a saying with us—‘As with the master so with the servant.’”

Gottfried exchanged a look of understanding with him. “Solve for me one doubt: if thou succeedest in delivering the unfortunate one from his bonds, art thou sure that he will willingly take to flight? He himself by his own free-will renounced his freedom; he spoke of a valuation which was to deliver him, and yet I saw he looked like one who despairs of his fate.”

“My master keeps his faith like few in the country,” answered Wolfram, “but when he can escape he will not delay. Dost thou not know?—have the Sorbes concealed it from thee? When they held council in the hall, they passed a shameful judgment upon him; for it is said that at their approaching high feast they are to place him on the sacrificial stone as an offering in honour of their God. Miserable hounds!” he exclaimed, angrily; “whoever heard that one who had played himself into servitude should be destroyed by the knife of the sacrificer?”

“What thou tellest me is horrible,” exclaimed Gottfried, shuddering.

“Thou speakest of it as it deserves,” said Wolfram, approvingly, and pleased with the

anger of the monk. "He who gives himself up because he has lost his game, redeems himself from the man who has power over him by cattle and horses, when he can procure them; and it is an honour to the victor to value him low. My master is no prisoner of war; it is only to such that the stroke of the sacrificial knife is befitting, when the Gods demand the sacrifice of a man."

As Gottfried, speechless, wrung his hands, Wolfram continued, appeasingly: "Be calm; my master will frustrate their hopes; he himself shall receive his knife again, to use against whomsoever he will. And therefore, stranger, I will leave you, for I observe the Sorbe spies no longer follow in our track. If thou art ignorant of the way, as I fear, the cow-driver Gertrude will advise thee; she is from our side of the forest, and knows her way about the mountains, if I point out to her the next few hours' journey."

"Tell me one thing, Wolfram. The Sorbes keep good watch; no one who is larger than a weasel can climb up the hill without their spying him. How dost thou think of penetrating alone through the entrenchment?"

"Thou askest too much at a time," replied Wolfram, slyly; "ask cautiously, that I may

answer thee. I am not without assistance. The place where Ratiz is encamped was once an enclosure of my people, which they call the village of the wild boar. The robbers have slain many of the settlers, others are still there in servitude; to more than one it is insufferable to have to currycomb the horses of a Sorbe master; and I have acquaintance with them. Thou praisest the watch of the Sorbes: I fear only their dogs, the rough barkers; but I carry with me what will stop their howling."

"But Ratiz and his warriors on the height?"

Wolfram pressed his horse nearer to the monk. "Hast thou not observed, what a child might see, that the Sorbes are preparing for a new booty expedition? He has sold thee the prisoners before the dealers have come up, although these have the scent of a robbery, as the vulture has of the battle-field. That they may not come uselessly, he is going to make a new capture from the Frank villages in the south, or wherever else his spies may advise."

Gottfried called out indignantly, "And at the same time he desires peace with the Frank Prince!"

"Perhaps he thinks that the peace will be more valuable, the more he makes himself dreaded.

Canst thou compel the cat to avoid the mouse?" replied Wolfram.

"But thou," began Gottfried, after a time, "hast not bethought thee of what thou art preparing here for these. If, as is incredible, thou succeedest in delivering thy lord, then the fierce Sorbe will fetch back the women; broad is our track, and slow our passage."

"Thou also, the Christian man, wouldst not be too small for the feast of their Gods," answered Wolfram, reflectively, casting a look of compassion on the children. "Undoubtedly haste can save; if danger threatens you from behind, it will not be before sunset to-morrow." He looked at Gottfried suspiciously. "Our elders say that the Christian Priests understand many secret arts; perhaps it will please thee to take away the strength of the Sorbe horses, or to raise a delusive appearance to confuse the track to the spies."

"No man on earth can do that—only the Christian's God," said Gottfried; "I will commend ourselves to His protection."

Wolfram nodded assent. "I have always believed that your God can do much; I do not belong to those, who despise the Christian faith. The Christian's prayer and the heathen's prayer

may be powerful to stop the blood, when one has cut oneself, or to bring down rain from the heavens when the seed is dried up. But I observe that those do not live in happiness who most zealously call upon the Invisible. Therefore I prefer trusting to myself. And here I must separate myself from you. Do not let the women or any one else observe whither I turn from you. And listen: that I may show you my good intentions, I leave this horse behind; it is possible that I may repent it; it is possible, also, that an animal might hinder me; for it is not on horseback that I think of passing through the wooden fence of the Sorbes. Trude carries a hatchet, and may kill the cow. Farewell, stranger! if we see each other again, it will, I hope, be in the land of Thuringia."

The man looked once more upon the fugitive band—on the curly locks of the children and the pale faces of the women; then he dismounted from his horse, and waited till the driver of the cow came up to him. "Hear a confidential word, Trude," he said, in a low tone; "I am going for hunting booty over the hill. I leave the horse behind for you; the brown will be friendly towards you and the children; put the weak upon him—thus he may be useful to you, for haste is advis-

able. If I am not back by night, do thou keep watch, and keep up the fire, that you may guard yourselves from the noxious beasts of the forest."

The woman looked at him displeased. "'Teach this spring to thy young ones,' said the fox, as he sprang upon the hare, and bit off its head. If thou, the forest rover, dost abandon the defenceless, how shall these save themselves, with sticks in their hands and children on their backs?"

"I know many a warrior who fears thy tongue more than the blow of a sword; try it for once against the bears," replied the man, appeasingly, and went in a fit of uncertainty some steps on with her. "But I must depart, Gertrude," he said at last, confidentially. "Take heed to the path, that I may find you again; for he who leads you is only a stranger. This is the racing path of the Sorbes, on which they ride northwards for their plundering; it leads over hill and valley; on both sides the springs run downwards; you need not ford them nor bridge them over. If you make haste, you may come before sunset to-day into the large oak forest on the Saale, where the Sorbe stream falls into it, which is the boundary water of Ratiz from us. Across the Sorbe stream there is a ford; see to it that you pass through it before evening, and go an hour's journey west-

ward to the thicket of yew trees, from which a holy spring rises; there on a height stands an old walled tower of wood and stone—a border watch-tower from the time of our fathers, but the Slaves have broken it: there I advise you to rest, within the wall. But to-morrow take your course by the Saale river, northwards—the stream on your right, the forest on your left. Across your road run small rivalets, which are easily waded through; and the path is smooth, but thievish Slaves dwell on the banks. If you succeed in avoiding them, you will come at last to the large stream which they call the Black-water, where it runs into the Saale: over that you must float on the stems of trees, for the water is deep. Beyond the crossing you must in no case struggle upwards along the black stream, for there are wild cliffs and a haunted wood, dedicated to the night-Gods; and every one fears the valley on account of the spirits. But do you wander farther northwards by the Saale, up to a hill with an old ruined tower; make this your second night's rest. From there the road leads direct away where the sun sets, two days' journey."

"Repeat the story, that I may retain firm hold of it," answered the maiden, attentively. Wolf-ram gave his account again, laid the bridle of

the horse in the hand of the woman, and overlooked the placing of three children upon it, shouting. Then he sought a hard path, and sprang with wide leaps into the thicket.

In a great assembly of the Sorbes the sacrificial Priest imparted to the bound Ingram the fate which had been determined for him. Solemn was the mien of the Sorbe warriors when the Priest spoke, and Weissbart interpreted the speech; they watched the countenance of the bound man, to see how he would take the news, and saw with discontent that his eyes were not dilated, but they were lighted up with anger, as he called out to Ratiz, "Thy sentence is malicious and dishonourable; not as a warrior, but as an old woman, thou seekest a bloody revenge on the weaponless man."

"The insulting words of a bound man are like the chirping of the cricket," replied Ratiz, stepping proudly past him. "Bridle the Raven for me, that I may ride him; lead the sacrificial animal to the stall." Miros and some of the retinue led the prisoner to an empty block-house on the right. "If it pleases thee, Ingram," said the Sorbe, "to promise me that thou wilt not leave the place, I will leave thy feet free, that thou mayest move them."

Ingram thanked him by a look, but he said, "I take no favour from one of Ratiz's men, with however friendly a feeling it may be offered me."

"Then bind his legs, and force him down upon the ground." In a moment Ingram was bound, and laid on the ground, and fastened by the body to a heavy wooden log. The Sorbe left the place; a young warrior kept watch. Ingram lay on the ground a resigned man, and sluggish was the course of his thoughts. Only once he raised himself, as he heard the hoof of a horse: he called out a loud hurrah! which was answered by the neighing of a horse; and he heard the blow of the rider. Then all was still again. The sunlight glanced into the room through a small hole in the wooden wall; the golden square advanced constantly nearer to the opposite wall; he looked upon it with indifference; the hours were tedious to him. Near the hole through which the light came, a swallow had built its nest. The birds flew in and out; the young ones fluttered in the opening, and were fed by the old one. He thought, as he looked, that in his house also the swallows were building under the roof, and he quivered as if cut by a knife; but the thought passed away again.

The evening came; the watcher brought bread

and water ; he was thankful when the man put the mug to his mouth ; but he refused the bread. The golden sunshine became more fiery, then it disappeared in a wild red ; the last time the swallows came in, they twittered and quarrelled in the narrow nest, and he saw through the hole that the evening red covered the sky till it faded away into dull grey.

Darkness filled the place ; the man who was lying by the door placed a bundle of hay under his head, and slept. Ingram also laid his weary head back on the log, as well as his bound arms permitted ; his eyes closed, and everything about him became indistinct.

There was a gentle rustling on the ground outside ; something crept along the undermost beam, like the hedgehog when it crawls away along the hedge. Ingram raised his body up and his soul was on the stretch, both in his eyes and ears, and a humming sound came from his lips.

For the second time the hedgehog rattled along the wall, and for the second time he gave an answer ; and fixing his eyes on the air-hole near him, he saw that something had been pushed in through the opening ; it passed up and down as on a string, and sounded gently on the wall. He

knew it was a knife. His arms were bound and his feet bound, but perhaps he might be able to reach it with his feet and hold it fast, if he could succeed in removing the heavy log to which he was fettered. He pushed and bore up against it; then he seized the knife betwixt his bound feet, and struggled till he raised the handle to his mouth. He held the knife with his teeth, and gradually cut the cord which fastened his body to the log. Then he fixed the point of the knife into the ground, and rubbed the withes which bound his arms against the edge; with his freed hands he easily released his feet. It was tedious, anxious work. He still remained lying down, moving his arms and legs, till power came again to the swollen limbs. Then he knocked gently against the wall, as a woodworm ticks, and listened. A long time passed; at last he heard a well-known voice call gently: "Now to me!" The watcher moved, but quick as lightning Ingram drew his jacket off, threw himself upon the Sorbe at the door, tied the jacket over his head and the rope round his hands and feet, and whispered to him, "Thou hast to thank the mug of water for thy life;" and he sprang out of the open door. Outside nothing moved; he crept round the house, a friend's hand seized

him, and helped him to spring over the fence. Two men rolled down the hill, then sprang along the village lanes. The dogs barked furiously, and the men gave forth a curse. "The curs are their best help; we are in want of a hole to creep into." Then it became suddenly light as day; from the opposite side of the encampment a fire broke out; both sprang forwards as if driven by the winds. One of the watchmen, by the side of the fence, called to them. Wolfram answered in the Sorbe language, and pointed to the fire. Through a hole in the village fence they glided down into the ditch; the next moment they stood out in the open. Now for rapid steps and good fortune. Behind them sounded confused cries and calls. In front of the runners a high birch-tree rose up in a field; under its leafy roof a horseman held two spare horses. The fugitives threw themselves upon the horses, and rode into the darkness, whilst behind them the flames rose up to the sky, and the noise from the wakened village resounded.

The wild ride drove the blood quicker through Ingram's veins; he reached his hand from his horse to his trusty servant. "Who is the third?" he asked.

"Godes, one of us, a groom to Miros; he has

vowed himself to me. His master struck him with a whip, therefore he has struck him with a torch. The flames may be our preservation; as they rise on the other side of Ratiz's castle, their thoughts will be drawn thither from our course."

The horseman before them raised his arm warningly. "Be cautious, my lord; we approach the ring fence of the village boundary. No Sorbe watchman is so sleepy that he will disregard the red light in the sky, and the tread of three horses who are breaking out from their meadows."

They were galloping down a hill, covered by the foliage of the trees; now they went out on to the open field betwixt the stems of trees; behind them the light of the fire shone. It fell on the white Slave coats which two of the horsemen wore. "In the village there the hot fire helped us, but here it has burnt our night-mantle," muttered Wolfram. On one side of them sounded calls and cries, and the clattering of hoofs. "Now it is a question of life or death," cried out the man, and the fugitives rushed on like the storm-wind, behind them the pursuers. An arrow struck upon Ingram's saddle, another hit his waving hair. "Here is the wooden circle of the boundary," said Wolfram. They drove

their horses at the leap, and flew over ; still a few more leaps, and over them spread the branches of a pine forest. The horsemen rode along a small path up the mountain ; the horses stumbled and groaned. " If a horse breaks its foot, a Sorbe maiden will weep," cried Ingram. But the calls of the pursuers became weaker, and more distant. " They think the night-chase in the dark wood dangerous. Gently, Godes ; horses' bodies and men's bones are not of iron ; the branches drag one's hair, and the stems break one's knees."

They turned up the height through the thicket, and rode amongst low brushwood, over a long mountain ridge. The road had turned ; on their right the fires flamed higher and redder, and dark clouds of smoke whirled about. In the midst of the fiery blaze rose the hill of Ratiz—the hall and straw roofs lighted up by it. Suddenly a bright light shone upon the top of the hall ; a white light flickered over the roof ; immediately afterwards all the roofs on the hill stood in bright flames, and the red spread over half the night sky.

" There the robber's nest is burning," exclaimed Ingram's man, with wild delight ; " not in vain didst thou, my lord, threaten it with fire-flakes on thy entrance."

Ingram laughed, but he looked with fear on the flames, and a cold shudder passed over his body. Since his childhood the burning of a house had been a horror to him, and his companions had often on that account scoffed at him ; now he tried to turn away from it, but his eyes always returned to the fire ; he felt exactly like one who was placed in the midst of it, hopeless ; and with oppressed breathing he thought of the words of the youth, who had begged of him to wish nothing evil, and suddenly he remembered the watcher whom he had fettered under the straw roof, and involuntarily he turned his horse back to the distant Sorbe village. But Wolfram dragged the animal forward by the bridle, drove it on with a blow, and then cried out, laughing, "The animal observes that his stall is burning."

"Many a Sorbe woman will groan in a hot oven," exclaimed the leader in return.

"That is poor compensation for the fires they have lighted up in our villages," replied Wolfram ; "I think that Ratiz will lose his pleasure in burning Frank villages ; to-morrow the tapers will light him home." Ingram remained silent.

After another hour's ride the red glow died away on the horizon, and the pale light of a new day arose. Ingram saw with a light heart

the red fire disappear in the morning light. The morning mist settled on the hair and dress of the horsemen, and the horses went on their track in the misty dew that lay on the turf of their path. In front of their road gushed out a rivulet; they gave a drink to the horses, and the leader rode along the course of the water up to a place where many steps were visible on the wet ground; then they drove their horses behind an elder-bush not far from the other bank. The leader stopped.

"I perceive what thou thinkest of, Godes," said Wolfram. "Choose your way, my lord; the Frank women whom the Christian released have passed through the ford; one sees each footstep—the horse of the Priest with the foreign hoofs, the children, the cow, and here the heavy tread which Gertrude has imprinted on the ground. Shall we follow on their path? A blind man might feel it."

Ingram looked gloomily on the meadow ground. "In a few hours we shall reach them, if the weary Sorbe horses can still carry us, although thou hast chosen well among the horses of Miros."

"The women rested this night in the stone tower by the Saale, which the Slaves have broken down," remembered Wolfram.

Ingram looked down before them. "How can the bird fly when his wings have been plucked? I am weaponless."

"Yet I have seen thee formerly strike with the knotty branch of a tree, when other weapons failed," replied Wolfram, with astonishment.

"If we follow the track of the Frank women, we shall entice Ratiz on their path, and bring danger on their way."

"A hungry bear lays hold of the game that he first reaches. Dost thou imagine that the Sorbes think of anything now but revenge? One-and-thirty heads may pay for the red flame. Ratiz could hardly restrain his warriors, even if he wished it, when these, on their return home, raise up their wives and children from the ashes."

Again a cold shudder passed over Ingram. "A dear price will be paid for the head of one man."

"If he had but the Raven, and his sword," thought Wolfram, uneasily—"for the man is quite changed. If thou likest, we will ask Godes; he knows the Sorbes."

He called to the leader, and put the question. Godes answered, "Some will follow us men, to see whether they can catch us; but the Sorbe

people will, I think, go after the released women."

"And when do you imagine Ratiz will return to his destroyed fortress?" asked Ingram.

The man looked up to the sky, and reflected. "If he has seen the night fire—and he has seen it—he can before mid-day prepare his repast on the charcoal of his hall."

"Then in the evening he will wring the neck of the Priest," exclaimed Wolfram.

"Enough!" cried out Ingram, pushing his heel on his horse's flanks. They rode farther over hill and valley, till they saw before them the ruined tower, to which the track clearly led. They pressed on to the summit, rode round the desolate circle of beams, and discovered the resting-place, the skin of the slaughtered cow, the spot where there had been a fire, and in the corner plucked branches and collected grass. "Here was the bed of Walburg," said Wolfram. His lord cast a look upon it, then urged his horse again out of the rafters into the open. "Now we have them certainly," said Wolfram consolingly; "the track points northwards, just as I had instructed the woman." The horsemen followed the track cautiously; they passed over the stream, turned sometimes into the forest in

order to avoid the Slave houses on the road, and came in the afternoon to the black stream. Joyfully did they discover the place where the fugitives had passed through the water, and trotted on northwards after a short rest.

The ground was here firmer, and the track was lost to them. They stopped and searched; at last they found the track of the hoofs of two horses, which they followed, till Ingram came to a spot where the ground was soft again. "Full speed the animals have galloped which have left the troop; the steps of the little feet I do not see." He dismounted, hastened with rapid steps back, searched the whole surrounding country, but he perceived nothing of men's steps. "Has the Christian God taken them up from the earth?" he exclaimed sorrowfully. The horse-men trotted on uncertainly.

"The horses had no riders," said Wolfram; "my brown led; we may perhaps find them at the door of thy house, if they have not disappeared in the jaws of the wolves. Truly the stranger understands many secrets; the children are gone to the dwarf in the rocks, or flown away as birds. If the Sorbes follow them, then they will see each other again under the earth or in the clouds."

Ingram heard little of his man's comforting words; with anxious looks he sought along the Saale and on the other side of the thicket. But fruitless was the search. They stopped again, then rode cautiously back on the broader path, till Wolfram seized the bridle of his master. "Here they have gone to the rock, and here we lose their track. But we ride uselessly into the arms of Ratiz." Ingram turned his horse, and again they went full gallop homewards up to the height, which was to be the second night's rest of the women. There the riders sprang from their horses, and examined by the evening light the hill and surrounding country. But they found neither men nor their footsteps; at last, however, the hoof-tracks of two horses.

"I do not intend to rest here," began Ingram, breaking a gloomy silence; "follow me upwards among the mountains; perhaps we may see from the height their fire." Again they rode on farther; ascending the great mountain forest, they were obliged to dismount and lead their weary horses.

It became dark under the trees; they kept constantly listening for the sound of men's voices, or for other noises, but only the old rulers of the mountain forest—the giant trees—spoke to

them in their mysterious tones. At last Wolfram stopped, when they had ascended a dark woody valley. "Flesh and blood will not keep together any longer; if it pleases you, my lord, we will rest, otherwise we shall lose the horses."

Ingram sprang down, and spoke with a hoarse voice: "Unblessed will be the bed on which I rest this night; if rest is necessary to you, await me; I go back through the wilderness to seek the fire of the helpless. Do not hope to persuade me, Wolfram," he said, in a tone of command; "anxiety makes me angry. If I am not back by morning, go homewards, and expect me at the house."

"What one must do the other cannot hinder," replied Wolfram, sorrowfully, looking after his master. "I cannot think well of the understanding of a man who goes at night after the cry of the beasts of prey. Let us secure the horses from noxious animals, Godes, and fasten our girdles tighter, for small is the night repast. One sleeps after the other; he who draws the longest straw will have the first watch." They drew; Godes placed himself with his back against the stem of a tree, and laid his club near him. Wolfram stretched himself full length on the moss. "If a bear carries me away, give him the pay of a

bearer," he said sleepily, and was asleep after a few minutes.

Through the night Ingram struggled up the mountain ; his mind was disturbed ; wild was the flight of his thoughts, and around him was the darkness of death. He stretched out his hands before him in the darkness ; he touched the stems, and sank to the ground betwixt stones and knotted roots, but he ever rose up again and pressed on higher ; and ever did he see before his hot eyes, the burning village and the fiery flames which flickered over the straw roofs of Ratiz. He thought of the revenge of the Sorbes ; new fires would rise up in the border villages of his home, and on him the guilt would fall. Amidst these thoughts of anguish he heard the gentle words of the monk : "Revenge not, for vengeance is Mine." Foolish words for the ear of a warrior ! How can such an inactive man leave to his God the care of destroying his enemy ? Nay, his Gods have not been able to guard himself from the skill and artifices of Ratiz. Through the mist of the forest he turned himself away as a runaway servant ; his face was glowing hot, and his fists were clenched ; he stormed away, and struck with his body against the stems of trees and rocks, till he came panting up to the height where the

storm-wind had felled the old stems, and the grey night-heaven was visible above him. He climbed toilsomely over the entangled branches and roots, and sought a point of view from the height over the valley in front, to see whether sparks of fire shone through the darkness, or whether the sound of voices was to be heard. He knew that it was a childish hope.

All around him was a dark desolate horrible wilderness. Only the super-earthly ones spoke here, when the heads of the trees rustled ; and in the depths below the warriors of the forest, the wild beasts, howled. Here the Gods even were hostile to the unarmed man : would they be merciful to the band who were going along with the cross of the stranger ; and would they preserve the women from the claws of the bears and bite of the wolves—from the precipitous abyss and the falling trees ? None could say whether the Gods were powerful and well-disposed, and whether they themselves had entered into existence, and had created the race of men upon earth, and whether they must have become old and morose, as was stated by the wise ; and, whether the Gods and the races of men should again be destroyed in a bitter mortal fight, before the burning of the world. But the

Christian God was, as the stranger boasted, eternal, and He would reign eternally here on earth, and in the halls of heaven. Therefore was the Christian man so steadfast; for he trusted on the duration and on the protection of his God. . . . She had wounded her face, because she would not take the life of an enemy. Dearer to her than the pleasure of man was the command of her God. Her God had made her steadfast, because she was true to Him.

Ingram gave a deep sigh, and the howl of the grey wolves from below answered to his groans. He knew this song of the Gods' dogs; thus they cried out when they were preparing themselves for the repast of bodies on the battle-field or round the cattle-fold. There below they were roaming after their prey. And he thought of the weak palings which a woman's hands had struck—the women and the children, and around them the glowing eyes and the wide-spread jaws of the wolves. With a wild cry he swung his club, and sprang down like a madman; he fell and he sprang again, and fell again. As he raised himself up, he heard straight before him a stone slipping, and a little while afterwards cracking in the depth below. He threw himself back, and his hair stood on end, for he perceived that before

him yawned a precipice. For a while he lay, powerless, bathed in cold sweat; but again the beasts of prey howled, they quarrelled with one another, and their howl sounded like a hoarse laugh. He climbed backwards, and dragged himself along the height, till he heard the ripple of a spring; he felt his way to the water, collected some in the hollow of his hand, and carried it to his burning lips; then he cautiously descended along its course to the valley below, into which flowed a stream from the Saale. In the dawn of early twilight he saw on the other side of the stream the grey shadows of wolves at their greedy repast, their noses in the blood of the hunted deer, packed together like sheep round a water-trough. Drawing a deep breath, he turned back, and ran downwards along the stream of the Saale. It carried him to the spot which his man had chosen for the encampment of the women. Might they perhaps be resting there near him? There, where the woody hills descended to the banks of the Saale, he stopped. He beheld before him a glimmering fire; he heard the stamping of hoofs, and saw a grey-coated figure standing near a horse—the watcher of the encampment. The pursuers were on the road. He threw himself on the ground, and

drew himself into the shadow of the thicket ; fearfully did he gaze through the twilight at the women and children among the sleeping enemy. Thus he lay awaiting the early dawn.

He who was lying with red eyes in the beech foliage, and the Sorbe, who was watching a hundred steps from him, both night-travellers, did not know how near to them was the resting-place on which stood the cross. On a far-stretching height, about an hour's journey to the west, the monk had encamped his flock. Their journey had been quite peaceful—two sunny days amidst foliage and blooming grass, two quiet nights under the starlight. No wild beast had howled round them, and no night-spirits had haunted the forests ; they had passed by Sorbe huts, and there the Sorbes had brought them water from the wells, and stroked the cheeks of the children. A Slave woman had compassionately given a pot to Gertrude, as a valuable gift, that she might cook the roots and mushrooms in it for the children ; and little Sorbe children had run with them, to listen to their song, and had endeavoured to cry after them the *Kyrie*. Of the firelight at their back the travellers knew nothing, and when a Sorbe man inquired of them concerning it, they had been able to say so truly ;

and the man had believed them, and wondered much at the fiery sign in the heavens. On the last afternoon, when they arrived at the Black water, Walburg had for the first time, whilst the monk was passing by her, raised her veil, and said to him with an effort, "Do not rest where Ingram's man commanded thee; do not go along the path that he has chosen for thee; it would be in vain by a hasty journey to preserve the children from the pursuers. Let me dismount; I can go on foot very well; then drive the horses away northwards; for they draw after us the wolves and the Sorbes. I would rather trust our lives to the haunted forest and the cliffs of the black stream. There let us conceal the children." This advice was approved of by Gertrude, although she was afraid of monsters, for she had her own thoughts about the firelight, and about the fortune of Wolfram's chase. When they had passed over the Black water, Gertrude called some of the women and the children, and led them and the horses on to a soft ground along a strip of road on the same path which Wolfram had told her of, till they came to where the ground was hard and the steps imperceptible; then she drove the loose horses with heavy blows northwards, and taught the children to

step backwards, till they arrived at the spot from whence they had come.

“It is a child’s trick,” she, said, “but perhaps it may help to deceive the clever ones.” After that they proceeded along the Black valley, with the water on their left, till their way was stopped by a stream that ran from the direction of their home into the Black water. By the side of this stream they went up the valley; at last they ascended slowly and with weary limbs the mountain declivity, and went along the ridge some way farther, whilst the sky was becoming red. There they found an old barricade of trees, that formerly had been thrown up by hunters or fugitive valley people. They thronged into it, sought the spring, and lit a fire in the evening light among the trees. The women arranged a bed of heather for Walburg, and prepared a wild night’s repast. But the children seated themselves in a circle round Gottfried, who related to them the history of a King’s son of the Eastern country, whose name was Joseph, and whom his brothers had thrown into a deep pit—the whole story, up to where Joseph had found his old father again, and kissed him. The children sat round him; the smallest pressed into his arms, and hung round his neck. They looked

at him with their blue child-eyes so wide open and so joyful, that it appeared to him as if he were a saint among the angels. And when he had ended, and all around him were silent, a small heathen boy, whose name was Bezzo, called out, whilst he climbed up him and embraced him: "I am Joseph, and I want to eat." All laughed, and looked at Gertrude, who was stirring the pot with a wooden stick. Then the children collected in groups round the fire, and the women divided the bits among them on little plates of bark, after which they also thought of their own meal. Gottfried sang to the children the night-prayer, and a grey forest bird sounded his rough trill to the "Amen" of the community, just as once old Hunibert had done in the cell among the brothers who were hard of hearing. Then Gottfried laid the children to rest for the night, clinging to one another, with their heads pressed upon the moss. Thus they all slept.

Near him sat a young heathen woman; her hair hung dishevelled about her pale face, and her eyes stared vacantly around. She had tottered on silently among the others during the two days, and the women had served her with shy sympathy, though so unhappy themselves. Now she opened her lips for the first time:

“Thou carest well for the living, stranger ; but of little use is thy trouble to the dead child who lies worn out on the road ; small were his legs, and he wept as he ran. Now his shadow whisks in the night along the wild path, and seeks its mother, or it sits deep down in the well where the white woman guards poor children’s souls. Cold is the water ; mute cowers the child ; the mother longs after it, and life is hateful to her.”

Gottfried knelt down by her on the moss, the tears running over his face. “The white woman I know who guards thy dead child, and I know the way that leads to it ; for something is known to us of the little one, and it is written in the Holy Scriptures : ‘Of such little ones is the kingdom of heaven.’ Thy darling does not cower in a cold well ; it is the Virgin Mary, who, as I think, rules high in heaven over the children. They dwell in bliss, and wave their wings, and are called by men, high angels. They shout blessings to the pious ones who rise up from earth into the halls of heaven. Wait, woman, and trust ; thine angel also will fly to thee in thy last hour, and carry thee up to the halls of eternal bliss.”

The woman wept aloud ; then she laid her hands over his, and kneeling down to him, prayed

to him in her anguish: "Repeat thy song, that I may echo it."

Gottfried again said the pious prayer, and she repeated the words, groaning.

At last he went to Walburg, looked whether her wound was dressed, and blessed her. The sick woman endeavoured to raise herself up, and pressed his hand thankfully. The monk drew his hand back, but it trembled. "Do not show me thy faithful feeling, maiden," he said, "as in caring for thee, it is not in order to please thee, but because I act according to the commands of the great God of heaven. Think of Him: I am only like the breath of wind, which conveys His voice to thee, that it may sound in thy ear. I have left father and mother, and torn myself from the heart of my sister; I cannot indulge in love to any human being, only to Him whom I serve; and what He commands me, that I do, be it hard or easy." Thus he strengthened himself, sighing.

Walburg sank back on her bed, and Gottfried stepped with bowed head to the entrance of the enclosure. The night passed on, the women leant their heads against the stems of the trees, and Gottfried sat long alone with his thoughts, till his eyes also were closed in slumber. And in

his sleep he made the sign of the cross, when the howling of the forest animals sounded from below, and the owls screamed.

Wolfram looked wearily towards the morning sky, when branches crackled on the height, and Ingram sprang down. With disturbed countenance the Hero cried out: "Only one sign have I seen—the fire of the Sorbes; they lie with twenty horses by the Saale; two troops of hunters are envying each other the game; the search begins anew; on to our horses, and into the forest!"

V.

THE ASSEMBLAGE IN THE FOREST.

As a wild boar rushes snorting into its lair, when it has with difficulty avoided the bite of the hounds, thus did Ingram spring into the Raven House. He shook off from him Munihild, the slave, when she stretched out her arms to him; and to his servant also, who called out a joyful greeting, he gave a short answer. With burning eyes, longing for sleep, he threw himself on his bed, but sorrowful thoughts tore him hither and thither. As a fugitive servant, without sword or horse, he returned to the house of his fathers. He saw everything once more before him: the scoffing mien of the Sorbes, the burning village, a woman who turned angrily from him, and the foreign boy before whom she knelt. He clenched his fists, and cast off from him the fur covering of his bed. "Are they in the village?" he cried to Wolfram, as he entered.

"Only a few are watching below, and none were able to say anything of them. About the Priest's hut, also, all was empty and still," replied his man. "If they have flown, who knows where they have stopped? and if they have been carried away to the mountain, who knows when they will return?" Ingram hastened to the door.

"Whither, my lord?" exclaimed the man, holding him powerfully fast. "After such a wild chase, and four sleepless nights, thy senses are distracted. I will not suffer thee to mount thy horse again yet. We have done all that is possible in the powers of man, and still more. We have allured the Sorbes on along our track; if the vanished ones still tread upon the earth, we have thus, perhaps, delivered them from the enemy. What the wild beasts of the forest may have done to them, that we cannot help. Foolhardy should we be to go after the Sorbes, who are returning home; and without a track would the fugitives remain to us during the second ride. If it had been for the heads of our brothers, we could not have ridden a madder chase. Now thy strength is gone; take care of thyself." By such words he forced his master back on the bed, and seated himself by him. He told him again of the forest paths

which they had searched in all directions, and how probable it was that the magic prayer of the Priest had delivered the wanderers from danger, till at last Ingram's head sank back on his pillow, and an unquiet sleep bereft him of consciousness. Then for the first time Wolfram slipped away to his own room.

When Ingram awoke, late in the morning, from a confused dream, Wolfram stood again by his bed. "It was wrong to awaken thee, my lord ; but thine eyes will see what is incredible, if it pleases thee to step in front of the door. The valley is changed ; I see many men collected out of the country ; on all the roads warriors are coming in festive dresses, and women also amongst them, which was formerly unheard of at a council of the people. Heathen and Christians throng about the house of Memmo. Herr Gerold himself is come—the new Count whom the ruler of the Franks has sent as Border Watcher, and with him the plump woman, Frau Berswind, his wife. I see many spears of chieftains and men from all the forest villages. In thy court-yard also the horses of good comrades are stamping. Thy companion Bruno awaits thee—Kunibert also, and others, with their kindred ; for a great message is announced from the Frank ruler, and

the stranger is the centre of the whole movement."

Ingram sprang from his bed, and went out in front of the door, where a number of honourable country people received him with dignified greeting, and remarked with curiosity his disturbed appearance. But his looks, and those of others, were turned away to the pasture ground and meadows which spread round the house of the Christian man Memmo. Ingram looked with perplexity on the festive crowd of stamping horses, armed travellers, and numerous troops of countrymen, who were spread wide over the fields, as at a great popular market, and were constantly increasing. He recognised the banners of many nobles, who had come thither with their retinue; above all, such as were inclined to the Christian faith, like Asulf, one of the first in the land. Gundhari also, son of Rothari, a wealthy man, moved quietly among the throng. Godolav was there—a large man, one of the Thuringians, who were called Angli, because in ancient times their fathers had come from a northern people into the land; and also the Chieftain Albold, son of Albhart, whose property bordered on the village fields. But heathen nobles also walked among the multitude; among them

many who were bitter enemies to the new faith.

"Truly," exclaimed Wolfram, in fresh astonishment, "much honour is shown by our lords to the wandering stranger, that they seek him here in the bad hut, under a roof the shingles of which have flown away in the wind."

"Never could I have thought that so many in our country would bend their knees before the cross," began Bruno, the son of Bernhard, a distinguished man from the free moor, whose race from olden times had been friendly to the house of Ingram. "The stranger has moved the whole country with his staff like a heap of ants; his messengers have ridden over all paths; he himself wandered to the market at Erfurt, to the Count, who holds a tribunal there, and Herr Gerold forthwith sent two of his horses over to the bailiff's house, that they might ride with the stranger and protect him. See, there the stranger steps out of the house; he is quite altered in dress and bearing, and moves about like a great lord."

Winfried stepped out of the house in Bishop's robes; his dress shone with silk and gold; in his hand he held a crooked staff; behind him came Memmo and another Priest. "There is also

Bardo, with a grey coat, who sits at the Count's table ; he was a good drinker formerly, and many a bit of horse's flesh have I seen him destroy at the sacrificial feast ; to-day the strife-loving man wanders about humbly behind the stranger. Truly this man knows how to bow down many necks."

"Not ours," replied Ingram, gloomily turning his back on the valley.

Kunibert, an old man of Ingram's kindred, came from the plain up to his countryman. "I see all the people are gone mad," he began ; "thou also, Ingram, hast, as I hear, ridden in the service of the foreign Bishop."

"I went on mine own business to the Sorbes," replied Ingram, gloomily. "But you, I see, have all assembled, to bow down before the stranger."

"Thou dost not know what honour is given him before the people ; he has brought a Latin message into the country ; a letter was written on his account from the Frank ruler to our Chieftains and the whole people. Gerold, the Count, caused the letter to be read by his priests. The man was to remain uninjured amongst us ; the Frank ruler has declared him to be his ward : if we seek for judgment against him, we must send our complaints to the Frank Count ;

the stranger is not amenable to our tribunals. All this was conveyed in the letter which the Priest interpreted and which the Count confirmed. The whole circle were astonished when they heard from the beast's skin the words of the great Frank ; it is difficult to raise one's head against it."

"When we hear what offends us," exclaimed Ingram, "we use angry words ; and when words are of no effect, we use our swords."

"How shall a man struggle against invisible powers, which speak to us from a distance ?" cried out Kunibert ; "truly the Christians understand many arts against which we are weak. They have the magic of the Latin tongue, which few of us know. In their letter-writing they converse with one another like fellow-countrymen ; even when at home they speak in different tongues. When I was young I fought in the Frank army on the Rhine, and afterwards on the Danube ; and at all the places I found the Latin language and the same secret in their writing characters. They send their words to one another on the skins of animals, over land and sea. With a reed they write orders, and their words remain fast to the end of time ; and if our will revolts against them, they point to their parchment, and

no one can contradict it. What some one has spoken many years before, they can testify to by dark characters; according to them they give and make presents, and decide what is thine and mine."

"Truly," exclaimed Ingram, "I hope that the oath of an honourable man stands higher than their black writing, and before I give up what belongs to me on account of any letter that they send forth, I will fight with each of them in the circle of my countrymen."

"The new prophets seldom take the sword, for they are opposed to it in their unwarlike way. If they were heroes, who were stronger on the fighting-heath than their opponents, a valiant man might easily accommodate himself to them, although unwillingly. But to give such honour to unarmed strangers as the Frank ruler appor-tions to this Winfried, is a shame to us all, and I left the assembly because my anger about it oppressed my head."

"Yet I advise," began Wolfram, who had just then approached, "that my lord should descend from the height. For I perceive that down there they are about to read new letters. Never yet have so many strange things been discussed in the circle of the forest people." In spite of their

anger the men descended into the open country—Ingram with a heavy heart ; for the meeting with Winfried was uncomfortable to him, and he concealed himself amidst the crowd.

By the linden tree, where the large Frank banner waved, Count Gerold held a parchment up on high, and called out over the crowd : “ This is a letter from Rome, which the venerable Pope Gregory, who sits there on the golden chair, has written down, and sent to the Chieftains of the people. Let him who would hear his words draw near.”

Then all pressed round the linden tree ; a Priest read the Latin letter, and the crier gave forth with a far-sounding voice the interpretation, in the language of the country, of what the Priest said, sentence by sentence. The community heard the words : “ To the powerful men, his sons, Afulf, Godolav, Milari, Gundhari, Albold, and all God-loving Thuringians, who are true Christians, Pope Gregory sends this.”

With heads erect, and glowing cheeks, the Chieftains whose names were called advanced in front of the others ; and the burly Gundhari cried aloud in his joy : “ I am Gundhari, and here I stand.” The whole assembly looked timidly at the renowned people who were

spoken to from a distant land through the white parchment. Their kinsmen pressed round them, and many stretched out their necks, in order to obtain a sight of the writing.

The crier continued, proclaiming the words of the Pope's letter: "We are informed of your noble faithfulness to Christ. For when the heathen have pressed you to the service of idols, you have with firm faith answered, that you would rather die blessed than in any way violate the fidelity to Christ which you had once taken upon you. We are filled with great joy on this account, and have returned befitting thanks to our God and Saviour, the Giver of all good. His grace will procure you greater prosperity, if with pious minds you seek your safety at the holy seat of the Apostle, as it becomes King's sons and inheritors of the kingdom to seek salvation from the kingly Father. Therefore we have sent to your assistance our beloved brother Boniface; we have consecrated him a Bishop, and appointed him to be your preacher, that he may direct you in the faith. We desire and admonish you to agree with him in everything, that your salvation in the Lord may be complete."

A reverential silence followed this announce-

ment. At last Afulf began, who was by race and property one of the most distinguished—a dignified man, whose grey locks hung over his broad shoulders: “If it please thee, my lord, let me see the place on which the reverend Father in Rome has written my name.” Winfried took the parchment, and pointed to the name; all pressed near.

“Great is the honour which thou hast accorded to us through the letter,” began Godolav; “we beg of thee, my lord, to read to us and the people once more the wonderful message. For it is dearer to me than a good battle-horse, or a whole herd that feeds on acorns in my forest.”

Once more Winfried read; the men listened with folded hands, and nodded their assent at every paragraph.

“I have always thought,” began Afulf, afresh, “that the great God of the Christians, to whom we have vowed ourselves, observes very well whether His men keep their oath to Him faithfully, and avoid horse’s flesh; but now I see that His powerful eye reaches over distant lands—that even the Bishop who sits as messenger of the Apostle at Rome knows accurately how I have behaved under my oaks. What other God can come up to so great a knowledge? For He who

knows this, knows also other things that I do ; and if I show love to Him, I am sure that He will reward me in this or another life as pleases Him. Therefore I desire to give thee, reverend father, a sign that I am thankful to the great Lord of heaven. We hear that thou comest hither to build a holy place for our God, whom the heathen call the new one. There is a property belonging to my inheritance—a late clearing ; there are thirty morgens of arable land, also forest meadows, and a little wood ; thou canst see the land there below in the valley : take it, I pray thee, from me as a gift for the Lord of heaven, that thou mayest found a church, and place a priest there, who may raise intercessions to the great King of heaven for me and all of my race, that He may henceforth think graciously towards us.”

“Herr Afulf has spoken like a prudent man, who cares for his own welfare,” called out Albold ; “and we all know that he is of noble race. But I do not think that he has a right of precedence over all our countrymen, and that he alone should have, before others, a church and a shaven man to pray for him. I also offer arable land here, quite in thy neighbourhood ; for my possession is not less than his ; and I hope that

the gift which we others bring will also appear valuable to the Holy One in heaven."

"I wish the same," cried out two or three voices; and the offers of church land followed each other rapidly.

"What you offer to the Lord," said Winfried, on the steps of the altar, "like King's children who would gain the favour of the kingly Father, that I receive in the name of the Lord of heaven, that it may be for the honour and salvation of you and your families. Step near, and confirm your gifts on my hand, kneeling before His face, in the presence of the Count and the community, that all may be secured by your vow."

The men knelt before the altar, and made their vows.

Hitherto the heathen had stood apart, and laughed scoffingly at the willing gifts of good land. But when a third letter from Rome was read aloud to the whole people of Thuringia, which concerned them also, they felt it an honour that the great Bishop in Rome spoke so confidently to them as to good acquaintances; and the kindly-meant address restrained the outbreak of their anger.

The Christians walked from the Count's banner, led by Winfried and the Priests, in a long pro-

cession to the altar, which was raised under the shadow of the trees. The service of God began. The heathen drew back, and listened to the distant prayer and solemn song of the Priests. Then Winfried mounted the steps of the altar, and spoke to the community of the message of salvation; that the great King of heaven had sent His Son upon man's earth, in order to deliver all from evil and sin; and to bind them, by holy baptism and their vows, in a great society, that they might find happiness and salvation here, and after this life dwell in Christ's heaven as holy companions of the Lord of heaven. And he proclaimed the high commands, according to which every Christian should live, that the Lord might esteem him a faithful servant. The voice of the preacher sounded powerfully, and penetrated deeply into their souls; the heathen also listened with favourable ears. Never had the men heard so sagacious a speech about heaven and earth, sounding from a deep human breast; the power of the words they felt to be heart-stirring. When he had ended, and the Christians all knelt down that he might bless them, all was still among the heathen, and no laughter or scornful words sounded repugnantly during the solemn

action. Even the wildest were awed by the presence of the nobles, and perhaps still more by the horsemen of the Count, who with their spears kept a wide circle round the tree.

After the holy service the Christian Chieftain and the people pressed reverentially close to Winfried. They sought to gain a friendly word from him, to seize his hand, or to touch the corner of his dress; but he spoke to each individual as a Prince to his trusty followers, listened to their petitions, and knew how to benefit each one by talk and comforting sayings. Herr Gerold wished him happiness. "All has prospered well with thee to-day. I hope much good from thy arrival, for more willingly will they now pay me the tribute, when thou dost admonish them, and I trust now, as thou hast blessed their weapons, they will give stronger blows against the Slaves than before." Then the people saw with astonishment that even proud Frau Berswind bent down to the hand of the Bishop, as she said to him in a low tone: "Reverent Father, if I am rightly instructed, it is written in the holy book that all men vowed to the Lord shall keep far from their bed all Wend women, whom they have won by their spears or have bought. But many in this country and else-

where do not act thus, for they caress the women-prisoners, and even bestow gifts on them—silver needles and rings. This is a great grief and vexation, and I beg thee urgently to admonish Gerold concerning it.” This Winfried promised faithfully to do.

Again a Chieftain began: “We would gladly know thy opinion, my lord, concerning the sacrificial feasts of the heathen, that we may conduct ourselves as becomes Christians; for jovial is the sacrificial feast on green turf, and unwillingly would many miss it. But I never eat the horse’s flesh, unless I have first signed the cross over the plate, that the heathen food may not be repugnant to the Christian God; I hope that will please thee also.” Then the Chieftain Milari, who had been named in the Roman letter, touched the Bishop and spoke to him confidentially: “I am not a man who am jealous of another’s honour, especially when he himself also enjoys it; but as concerns the Hero Gundhari, we were all surprised that he was named in the letter of the Roman Pope. For formerly he stood often at the sacrificial stone, and has danced with the others in the Eastern dance. But then, when he resisted, he was cross in consequence of the strong mead which he had drunk; and when the

neighbours laid hold of him to lead him away, he became angry, drew his sword, and swore that he would be an enemy to every one who drew him from his seat. Whether he did that out of fidelity to the Christian faith, thou thyself mayest judge, for he began immediately afterwards to sing angrily, knocked his hand violently on the table, and fell asleep."

"If he resisted once in drunkenness, in the future he will do it also in temperance," said Winfried consolingly. He then turned to the Count. "In the distance I perceive the Thuringian Ingram of Raven House. Some days ago I sent him to the Sorbe Ratiz to deliver, by means of the property of the Lord, women and children who had been carried off. It is terrible to me, that he has returned and keeps in the distance if it pleases thee, I will have him called, that he may give a report."

"I understand that the man has a good reputation," answered the Count. "If he comes from the Sorbes, others besides you Christians will desire to hear his message." He commanded the crier: "Invite the Chieftains and old men to a circle in the house of Frau Hildegard, and call upon Ingram to appear before the Bishop."

The Chiefs conducted the Bishop in procession

to the steward's house; shortly after Ingram was led into the compact circle, which was collected round the hearth. His cheeks were pale and his aspect gloomy, as he stepped among the Chiefs of his people; he greeted the assembly silently, and avoided the eyes of the Bishop, but the Count pointed silently with his hand to Winfried. "Where is Gottfried: where are the children, Ingram?" cried out the latter, with an emotion which he could not master.

"I do not know," replied Ingram, shortly.

"And thou standest uninjured before me!" exclaimed the Bishop.

"Thy messenger has delivered the women and children by thy silver; all prospered with him with Ratiz. Five days ago they went in the early morning from the camp of Ratiz; my man Wolfram accompanied them as far as the neighbourhood of the Sorbe's stream; I found their track the day after, on this side of the Black water, but themselves I have not found."

Winfried turned away, struggling violently to restrain his anger and sorrow, with humble resignation. But his countenance was severe, when he turned again to Ingram. "I have often heard that it becomes a warrior to stay by the side of his travelling companions in danger."

"It was not I who chose thy messenger as a companion; thou didst impose him upon me. He is led by his God, I by the fate that is ordained for me, by the God of my people."

"Yet from what we are informed of thy character," began the Count again, "thou wouldst not leave a companion without necessity in the wilderness; if it please thee, tell us what has separated thee from him."

Ingram looked gloomily down. "I need not conceal anything, for it will be well known among the people. I lay bound with Ratiz. The dice were adverse to me; I had lost my freedom in the game."

The assembly were much disquieted, and many rose from their seats.

"It was ill-considered to venture a good sword of Thuringia upon a throw of Sorbe dice," replied the Count; "I hope that thou hast found a moderate ransom."

"The hounds broke faith with me," exclaimed Ingram; "they refused the ransom, and vowed me to their sacrificial stone and the knife of their priest. But I broke away the following night; behind me the fire rose to the sky: the encampment of Ratiz is burnt down."

A loud cry of astonishment and approbation

sounded through the assembly; Herr Gerold rose up quickly, and approached Ingram. "Truly, man," he exclaimed, "thou annoucest in cold words what may cause hot work for thy people the whole summer. But I am not sent by my exalted sovereign Karl into this country to allow the hoofs and horns of your herds to be driven eastwards. And thou hast brought a good message to my sword; whether to thyself thy countrymen may decide. Didst thou set fire to the robber's nest?"

"Godes did it,—a servant of the Sorbes, who gave us the horses for flight. I sent him to-day on one of my animals northwards, into the land of Saxony, that he might escape the vengeance of the Sorbes."

"Thou hast acted as a wild boy," said the Count, "and in thine own business hast brought a war upon thy people. But I am surprised that Ratiz still keeps the peace, and even begs for safe conduct for envoys. For his messengers wait already on the frontier. Canst thou inform me, Ingram, of what may concern us?"

"Only of what concerns myself, my lord. I stand in the circle of nobles and old men; I cannot live disgraced. Yonder Christian has reproached me with having broken faith with his companion,

you have learnt that his complaint was unjust. But I will bear testimony to his messenger whom they call Gottfried, that he acted towards me as a faithful travelling companion, although I did not desire his good will. For he offered his own head to the Sorbes for mine, and would have remained in my place, if the Sorbes and I myself would have accepted his proposal. And therefore I was sorry that I did not find him in the wilderness, although I and my companions sought him during three days. This I tell to you, that you may know it,—not to the Bishop, who is hostile to me.”

When Ingram spoke so daringly against the Bishop, a murmur arose among the Christians, and a noise of weapons among the heathen. But Ingram continued: “Yet one great anxiety oppresses me, and concerning that I will ask you. I escaped from Ratiz, because he chose to act against me contrary to our agreement; but I escaped from my bond without ransom. And the Sorbes will henceforth blame me as a runaway servant; that gnaws me to the heart.” He stamped with his foot on the ground. “I wish to know whether my country-people will consider me as such, and whether they will openly or in secret agree with him, when an enemy in the

country ventures to speak so ignominiously of me. And if you think so lowly of me, I will at once saddle my horse and ride out of the country till I find Ratiz and his bands, and then seek an honourable delivery from the clothing of my body."

A deep stillness followed his words. At last Afulf began—the eldest among the assembled nobles: "If it is as thou sayest; if the Sorbes promised thee a valuation, and afterwards destined thee for the sacrificial knife, no upright man can blame thee for having cut their withes as soon as thou couldst. But if thou hast played away with the foreign robber thy horse and sword and freedom, such a wild deed will lie henceforth upon thy life; thou must bear it, and no one can take away the burden from thee. Many will consider it as a jovial venture, because thou hast again released thyself, but many also as a wound which thou hast inflicted on the memory of thy forefathers. Take care, Hero, that thy country companions may in the future be able to give thee better praise for any famous deed thou mayest do."

The Christians agreed with the Chieftain, and the heathen were silent, but none spoke against it. Again there was a deep silence, then Win-

fried began : "It is not my office to decide upon the worldly praise of a warrior ; that is alone for the Chieftains of the people. Only one thing I must say to you : loving and merciful is the God whom I serve, and He judges not only the deeds, but also the thoughts. Much wild work is judged by the Lord of heaven more favourably, because He sees into the hearts of men. If it please you, nobles and wise men, ask the warrior why he gambled so presumptuously with the Sorbe."

"Thou hearest this question, Ingram," said the Count ; "if thou wilt give an answer, speak."

Vehement pride and dislike to the priest struggled in Ingram with the wish to say that which would have justified him in the eyes of his country-people, but his pride kept the mastery ; the sweat came upon his brow, as he answered, "I will not."

Then rose Kunibert, and cried out, "As Hero Ingram is silent, I will tell you what I have heard from his servant Wolfram. It was about Walburg, the Frank maiden, the daughter of his guest friend, whom the Sorbes slew, that he entered upon the game, because the Sorbe had destined the woman for his bed, and would not otherwise give her freedom."

A low buzz passed through the assembly, and the clouded countenances cleared up. "If it was for a woman, Ingram," began the Count, laughing, "and for the child of thy guest friend, thy young companions and the maidens will not think the worse of thee for that. But I advise thee not to saddle thy horse like a desperate man. Wait till the day comes when as one of my host thou canst make thy reckoning with Ratiz." He made a sign of dismissal to Ingram, who left the steward's house silently; behind him sounded the noise of lively talk.

The evening came, and the assembled people encamped themselves for a night's rest; round about the village in the plain and on the mountains, the fires blazed; the men were separated according to villages and families; they spoke of the events of the day, and on the great change which the new Bishop would effect in the country. Winfried walked amongst the fires, accompanied by the Priest; when he approached a band of Christians, a loud acclamation resounded, he stepped up to them with a greeting, and spoke to the men. Then one heard the sound of a little bell, carried by Memmo; the Christians knelt round the flames; Winfried said the evening prayer, and gave the blessing. But where a

heathen troop were sitting he went past like a Chieftain, with a dignified greeting ; he received a cold greeting in return, and gloomy looks, yet none ventured to say a word to wound him ; it was only when his back was turned that some low curses sounded.

No fire burnt round the Raven House ; only the last evening light gilded the linden-tree which stood in the middle of the court-yard. There a number of distinguished heathen men were sitting and lying ; their countenances were full of care, and their speech was concerning important things.

“ I rejoice, Ingram, that thou didst so boldly withstand the stranger in the assembly,” began Bruno, the son of Bernhard, to the comrade who lay by him on the ground with his eyes turned downwards. “ Yet I must honour the stranger on account of the words which he spoke at last about the dice. For weighty was the admonition, that one should consider the intentions of a man.”

“ His speech is crafty and his thoughts reserved,” cried Ingram angrily from the ground ; “ the Franks on the Main did wisely to conceal his office from me.”

“ No one will deny,” continued Bruno, “ that

he is an able man; he spoke powerfully to-day before all; he cried out as the storm wind cries, It has been unheard of in the world, that any one should in the light of day proclaim before all people so great a message, and testify by letters and writings that his God is more powerful than the Gods to whom we pray."

"A liar also may have a loud voice," replied Kunibert.

"But he is no vagrant," continued Bruno; "he moves about like a King in a distinguished dress; he appears quite a different man to the little Meginhard, and if I judge right he does not at all look like a deceiver."

"How canst thou compare him to a King," exclaimed Kunibert, "as he carries no weapons, and is quite unwarlike?"

"Have not many people who pray to our Gods the like custom? Among our neighbours the Saxons, the Sacrificer is not permitted to throw a spear or to fight among the bands. Tell us, Ingram, as thou hast been his guide, whether thou hast found him fainthearted."

With an inward struggle Ingram answered. "I have found him fearless in danger, but, unlike a man, he refused to revenge himself on an enemy."

His companions looked astonished at one

another, and the younger ones laughed contemptuously. Only Bruno spoke, shaking his head : "But I have perceived that their God commands them to love their enemies ; yet I do not laugh at such teaching, though to any man capable of bearing arms it may appear inglorious and foolish. For I remark that there is a secret meaning in it which I do not understand. But Count Gerold is a Christian, and many others who will be glad of his sword. Whatever may in other respects be the spirit of the Franks, no one can say of them that they are afraid of blood. And just in this teaching of love, we may perceive that the Christians support themselves on a writing, which is delivered to them from a God ; for it is more possible for a God than for a man to command something superhuman ; and all Christians teach and say the same, even when it is annoying to them to act up to it. Observe well, exactly the same words spoken by yonder Bishop, were formerly used by little Memmo and the priests of the Count, although they were not so strict against horse-flesh, and lying with foreign women, as the stranger. Fearful for all of us is a doctrine which comes down from God Himself, and the truth of which is testified by His writing."

"Distinctly do our Gods speak to us," exclaimed Ingram, raising his head; "the song of the minstrel, and the proverbs of the wise are taught by them. I hear their voices in the rustling trees, in the melodious spring, and in the clap of the thunder. Every spring the storm-wind drives over the valleys; and when the God-hounds bark, and the spirit-horses snort, the great God of battle passes therein over our heads. Who can desire a stronger testimony than this, which we every day reverentially hear and see?"

"Thou speakest sensibly," said Bruno, looking up to the ravens, who were flying round the tree, screaming their wild song; "everywhere they float around us, and their messengers proclaim, that they are near. Yet I am fearful that they will be powerless against the stranger. If they dwell on the tops of the trees, if they soar through the air, why do they not punish him? He has erected a tent for the service of his God under the fruit tree, from which we cut our fate staves; by the tree runs a spring, to whose Goddess we pray; I looked at the tree, and I looked at the spring whilst he spoke; the foliage rustled just as formerly, and when he was silent, the spring continued to sing. I looked in the face of the sun, our dear lord, as his rays fell

upon his head, till my look was darkened by my audacity ; but it appeared to me that he looked out as joyfully as he ever did before, and was no enemy to him. Nay, I fear that even the thunder can do nothing against him."

Ingram sighed, he knew that the thunder God had not struck the audacious one.

"Therefore I say," continued Bruno, sorrowfully, "it is a great announcement that we hear in the light of the day, in clear words and through new thoughts. Whoever listens to his speech among the assembled people finds it difficult to withstand him. For the thoughts which he excites are far more powerful than the voices of the super-terrestrials, whom we honour. But, when the man stands alone in the dark mist, by the forest stream, by the waving corn, or by the herds in the twilight, then the announcement of the Christian becomes weak again, and our Gods become powerful. There is discord, I suspect, in the dominion of the Gods ; the new God of the Christians, whom they call the Trinity, rules like a King of day where men collect together, and powerful speech resounds, yet the Gods of our land hover near, they rule and create, but I fear they cannot overcome him. It is a fearful time for every true-hearted man. Whether it per-

tends a fight of the Gods and the destruction of man's earth, or a new dominion, who can say ? ”

He bowed his head sorrowfully, the others also continued silent, till Kunibert began: “Each of us has heavy thoughts. But I withstand the foreign practice and the new teaching, for the old Gods have given honour and blessing to my life, it would be unwise and wicked, if I were to abandon the gracious ones. Therefore I think that if a struggle has arisen betwixt our Gods and the Christian God, let us await respectfully, to see which may prove the stronger. For that will become clear to us men ; as he who shows himself the most powerful as bestower of fortune and giver of victory, him we must follow if we are not fools. If the Christian God is as powerful as thou sayest, he may soon give victory to our weapons against the Slaves, if we again fight against them. That, I think, will be the great trial of the Gods, in which our people will cast their lots and those of the Gods at the same time.”

“If thou followest the conqueror pliantly,” burst out Ingram angrily, “I shall remain true to the powers, to whom my Fathers have vowed themselves, and who have been honourable to me, by day and night, ever since I was a child. Long

have we known that there is strife on man's earth, and strife in the realms of the Gods. Every winter the dark death-powers strive against the good preservers of our happiness; toilsome is the struggle betwixt the warmth of day, and the night's rime; also behind the sun and moon there run, as tradition tells us, gigantic wolves, incessantly seeking to devour them. But I will, though I should be the only man, stand by the good spirits of my Fathers in the struggle of the Gods, whether they conquer or are subdued. If their world blazes with flames, I will be destroyed with the loved ones whom I have hitherto served; for I feel a hatred against the new cunning, and the smooth speeches, and the glad victorious smile of the Priest." He rose vehemently, hastened out of his court into the open ground. Bruno looked after him anxiously. "His mind has been disturbed by the Sorbe bonds, and I fear he thinks of some deed of violence."

The glowing evening red vanished into dark grey, only a pale red glow lay still on the mountain forest and the heights. Then was heard a solemn song on the valley road which leads from the Saale to the village. Out of the twilight a wandering train approached—the boy with

the wooden cross, behind him Gottfried and the whole band of women and children, Walburg in a cart drawn by two oxen. The rescued ones were received with cries of joy and loud acclamations by the people, when they approached the burning fires. The travellers looked with astonishment at the flames and the crowds of people, and received the congratulations of the thronging multitude. The Bishop himself hastened with open arms to meet the train. Surrounded by the people Gottfried related to him the first account of his mission,—how the released ones had gone away, and had penetrated by the Black stream, along the water channel, upwards into the forest; there they had experienced day and night the terrors of the wilderness. But when at last they came to a lonely house, the Host, although he was more of a heathen than a Christian, had harnessed the oxen to a cart, and, from fear of the Sorbe warriors, had placed in it, besides the wounded woman, his household furniture, and had accompanied the wanderers, with his house companions and cattle.

Ingram broke through the crowd, who were listening to the account. In happy joy he called out already from afar the name of the maiden. At this moment all bitter anger was forgotten, and

his manly face shone with a glorified brightness. Walburg recognised him. The veil before her face was moved, and she stretched out her hand towards him. Then Gottfried stepped forward, seized her hand, raised her, with the help of the driver, from the cart, and led her to Winfried. Walburg sank down on her knees, and Ingram moved back. With rapid words Gottfried mentioned her name and her story, and Winfried spoke to her lovingly: "Before a distant grave I vowed to take care of thee as a father. The heavenly Father has heard the first prayer that I have made to him for a human soul in this country: I receive thee as a pledge that the Lord will continue graciously to help my work." He looked towards the steward's house, where already numerous layers of trees were lying for the new building, and exclaimed joyfully: "In this corner of the forest a dwelling will I hope arise, in which many who are bound will be released from their fetters. Thanks to thee, my son, for the good journey; thy return delivers another also from heavy responsibility."

The little brothers of Walburg were clinging to the hands of Ingram. "Come to me, boys," cried Ingram eagerly, and drew them away with him.

But Winfried himself stopped his path. "The boys are mine, and mine is every head in this train."

"They are the sons of my guest friend, and I take upon me the care of their welfare," exclaimed Ingram, with flaming anger.

"By the goodness of the Lord the children have been delivered, and not by thine," answered the Bishop.

"They shall become warriors, and not knee-bending Christians," cried out Ingram, holding the boys fast.

"But I fear, Ingram, that thy wild household will not be for their welfare, and it is my duty to guard them from it, for they are of my faith. Let the hands free which thou holdest so fast."

Ingram put his hand towards his sword in an outbreak of anger. The Bishop seized the hands of the boys, and stood with erect head opposite to the furious man. "It is not the first time that I have stood before thy weapon," he exclaimed, reminding him.

The Count stepped quickly before Ingram, and held his sword hand fast. "Thou art mad, Ingram, to stir thyself against a shaven head. Be well advised, man; if thou raisest thy sword thou wilt lose thy hand."

But Ingram tore himself away, everything whirled before his eyes—blood-red were the faces which gazed on him mockingly, and quite beside himself he exclaimed: “He separates me from my Gods, and takes away from me those I love. I will be revenged for the injury or not live.” With a spring he swung his sword against the Bishop. Then he saw suddenly before him, not the hated face of the priest, but a woman’s face, pale as marble, her eyes full of terror, and on her cheek a blood-red wound, and he drew back horrified at the change.

“Seize the peace-breaker!” cried out Herr Gerold. Wild cries arose and swords glittered, but Ingram ran with raised weapon up the height; his friends and companions pressed out of the heathen host betwixt him and the angry throng, till the cries of the pursuers sounded in the distance, and the protecting darkness of the forest enclosed the hunted man.

VI.

WALBURG.

AFTER three days of teaching and solemn feast the assembled multitude had gone home, the Christians with heads erect, the heathen dejectedly. But through the whole country of Thuringia a movement was working, which was excited by the magic of one powerful man : the gust of wind from the forest valley had become a mighty storm, it drove through the whole country, and cast down the old heathen trees.

Winfried no longer dwelt in the hut of Memmo. By the advice of the Count a hall had been erected for him near the steward's house, where he might receive the people with more dignity. Yet he was seldom at home. Accompanied by horsemen, and a retinue of distinguished men, he roamed restlessly through the country ; and where he appeared men disputed about sacrificial feasts and their future salvation in the Castle of

Heaven. Many put on the white dress of the baptised ; still more, stood uncertainly aside, defenceless against the clear word from the man's breast, and against the demeanour of the man, who, like a God, gave his information with such certainty, where others were tormented with doubt. He found also everywhere bitter enemies, though against the first pressure of his teaching few only could guard themselves, for he spoke kindly, forbearingly, and indulgently to individuals, and treated everyone with honour ; he was friendly to the women, his countenance changed into bright joyfulness when he spoke to the children, and when he found anyone who was needy or afflicted, he gave all that he had, and begged so solemnly and impressively, that he often persuaded the hard-hearted to good deeds. Throughout the whole country, people said that he was an amiable and distinguished man, and therefore they listened to him willingly.

But also in the village, which he had first entered, a change appeared after a few weeks. In the steward's courtyard, which Frau Hildegard had offered as a gift to the Christian God, there arose by the hall a wooden tower, and on it a large square enclosed space, which was dedicated to the service of God. Outside were

many new block houses, a sleeping house for the ransomed women and children, near it a house for work, in which every day they turned their spindles and rattled their looms ; and opposite to it a second house with a large cross over the gable, the first school in the country. There sat the boys, who had become the Bishop's wards, on low wooden benches ; they learnt in their own language the Lord's Prayer and the Belief, and in Latin the Church prayers and songs ; besides that, they learnt to understand a little, the Latin words. For Memmo invented for them important sentences with German and Latin words, in this manner : *meus avus*—that is, my ancestor ; *pater* is the father, *vir* is I, the man, *filius* is the son. Memmo laughed proudly each time that he gave the boys a new sentence, he stroked the yellow curly heads of those who learnt well, as tenderly as he did the red hood of his goldfinch ; but to the indocile he counted their scores inexorably with a large birch rod, which the naughtiest had to deliver afresh into his hands every Saturday evening, in order that he himself might receive the first stroke. He also prepared writing materials to reveal to the boys the secret of writing. He brewed the black magic juice ink, whilst the boys were standing round him in

terror; he sought long in vain for a dark stone which he could split into writing tables, till at last the bear-catcher, Bubbo, brought him a piece out of the deep forest. Meanwhile he taught the children to cut for themselves small wooden tables, to polish them with glue, or to overlay them with white birch bark. If Gottfried was in the village, he instructed them in church song. The women and maidens also belonged to his school. Whenever the measure of the evening song sounded from the height over the village, the country people ceased from their work and looked fearfully up to the house, where the night greeting was offered to the new God. And when Memmo with his scholars passed through the meadows and wood, explaining to them the virtues of the trees and herbs, then the village boys screamed out at his little companions, as wild birds do to tame ones, and he had sometimes difficulty in separating with his stick the heads of the brawlers.

Wide through the land spread the report of the new school, and of the strange Christian discipline. Although the unwarlike conduct displeased the people of distinction, yet many a one thought it advantageous to venture a younger son there; but the poor people pleaded

urgently for reception, and Winfried began to think already of removing the school to the great market of the Thuringians.

Some of the women and children were taken away by their friends, but the greater number continued under the protection of the Bishop, and desired no better good fortune, for the household was well conducted, and all the necessities of life were prepared in fixed order. The Christians had, after the great assembly, on the admonition of the Bishop, brought voluntary contributions; provisions, flax, and even heads of cattle; and the dwellers in the house won other things by their industry. What the forest and fields bore of fruit that was good for food was collected, the harvest of the property brought in by zealous hands. The priests knew how to give each individual, according to his power, an office which would be useful to the household. Besides the steward and his wife, Walburg and Gertrude assisted in the household, the one in the women's house, the other in the stalls and in the fields. Whenever Winfried returned from his journey, he received, like a landed proprietor, the reports of his trusty ones; he stood joyously among the children, rejoicing in the good ones whom Memmo praised, and admonishing the

careless. And each time he had a special greeting for Walburg and her brothers.

Walburg had recovered. Memmo had given good proof of his medical skill on her; for many weeks he had forbidden her to work in the open air; now her complete recovery was announced, and she stood for the first time in the court, her countenance half covered by the veil, which, by the command of the Father, was to protect her scarred cheek sometime longer from the air. She held a web of linen cloth to the light, examined the threads, and measured the length by a stick, whilst two little maidens received the rolling folds into their lap. "It is not yet master's linen," she said in glad zeal to Gottfried, answering his silent greeting with a nod of her head, "for the venerable Bishop wished us first to work for the children. Only think, my brother, each of the boys is to receive, besides his woollen jacket, two shirts, and a pair of leather shoes. They will go about like the sons of Chieftains, and every one will esteem them, which is good, because they are now thy scholars. And then there are the beds to be stuffed for great and small, and bed ticks and coverlets to sew, and we have all hands full of work, that the house may be in order when the cold winter comes. Many

little beds are necessary; for Herr Winfried again wishes that every little one should have his own bed, which is unheard of in this country. But brown woollen cloth is already in hand, and I should like to make thee a house dress before the others; for, forgive me, brother Gottfried, when I say, that the one which thou wearest is threadbare, and we are distressed about that."

"Only take care of the others," replied Gottfried; "if my coat is bad, I will weave and sew one for myself, or receive another which a brother has sewed; as it is not the custom for a monk to wear women's work." He spoke this more eagerly than was necessary, and at the same time stroked the little Bezzo on his head, who was clinging to Walburg's feet, and, as she would not attend to him, impatiently climbed up her side. "They pinch me again," cried Bezzo.

"He means his shoes," explained Walburg, taking him into her arms; "he had bare legs, like the heathen which the Bishop will not allow, and a wild heathens, head, and the scamp knows that he is a favourite, because he was dear to thee on the journey. Be good, Bezzo, and beg the pious brother to sign the Cross over thee, against thy wild thoughts."

• With this Bezzo agreed; he struggled eagerly

to get from the neck of the maiden to that of the monk, and said, "I wish for a cross on the head, for then Aunt Walburg gives us some of the honeycomb." Walburg excused herself: "One must make the little ones love the Cross." But Gottfried colouring released the boy from the neck and arms of the maiden, placed him on the ground, speaking to him kindly.

"We women see thee seldom now in our neighbourhood," continued Walburg heartily, "and yet all hearts cling to thee; during the journey from the Sorbes thou didst take care of us more zealously."

"The monk is an unskilful adviser for women's work," answered Gottfried; "but I must tell thee, that in the next spring my sister Kunitrude is coming hither from the land of the Angle's; she will dwell with you. She has vowed herself to the Lord, goes about veiled, and is to be the mistress of a woman's community; she is wiser than I."

"Does a veiled woman understand Latin also?" asked Walburg, astonished.

"She whom I have named speaks it better than I; the reverend Father boasts of her skill in verses, she has read many holy books."

"How shall we be able to live with such a woman?" cried out Walburg, alarmed.

"She is as young as thou, and if I am not mistaken she resembles thee in countenance and demeanour," replied Gottfried with embarrassment. "I hope she will be a good companion to thee."

"She is young and has vowed herself to the Lord!" continued Walburg reflectively; "has the maiden taken upon herself so great a thing? For I know well that if she has taken the veil, she must never more go with the maidens into the meadows in May, she must never give a kindly greeting to any man, nor think of a husband or children in the house. That is a high and heavy duty for a young heart. Forgive me, venerable brother," she broke short, as she saw the colour in the face of the monk, "I forgot that she is thy sister; thou also hast dedicated thy young life to the Lord, and we others see it with astonishment." Gottfried bowed his head, greeted her silently, and went quickly to the school. But Walburg stepped up to the water-trough of the running spring, raised her veil, and gazed on the red scar on her cheek; with a sigh she let the veil fall down. "A scar in the face ill becomes a maiden," she said lamentingly to herself, "and hardly will any one now praise my cheeks. Perhaps the sister from the land of the Angles has

speckles on her face which causes her to renounce all earthly pleasure."

She felt a blow on her shoulder, and turning herself round quickly, saw Gertrude laughing at her, who placed a crown of ash leaves and red berries on her head, such as the maidens wear at the dance in autumn. "Better fortune for the future!" she cried out; "the wreath becomes thee right well, even though one only sees half thy mouth smile."

"The pious Fathers understand every thing," replied Walburg, "they know even how to make a maiden's face whole."

"The long coats are good men," exclaimed Gertrude; "but dost thou think one of them strong enough to swing a maiden over his hips in the dance?"

"Do not speak so wildly," begged Walburg, hanging the wreath against the spring.

Gertrude crossed her strong arms and spoke mockingly to her companion. "I think that thou art secretly like minded; for all here is very clean, but I have heard no one rejoicing but the little boys, and these also were admonished to bow their heads. It has never gone so well with me in my life as under the cross, and I have learnt quite willingly the *kyrie*, and to cry out the

Amen. But, maiden, there is many an hour in which I would give up the whole of the grandeur, if I could only once dance with a brisk boy by the night fires."

"Be silent about the heathen customs, that the children may not hear thee," admonished Walburg.

"Art thou so devoted that thy thoughts cannot go beyond the Christian court?" asked Gertrude. But when she saw the sorrowful look of the other, she regretted the question, and continued: "How is it that thou never speakest to me of the man, who, on thy account, came to thy father's hearth?"

"I fear to ask others about him," replied Walburg sorrowfully, "as I do not know how he is disposed towards me. The women tell me that he rides far from here in the army of the Franks. His disposition was ever for a great war expedition, and when he was the last time by the Main he wished to obtain intelligence for that object. Why dost thou look at me so, Gertrude?" she exclaimed eagerly, "thou knowest something of him which thou wilt not say: be merciful, and speak."

"Didst thou not hear what many know?" answered Gertrude. "The Count's court has sat

over him. If they have given judgment against him, others can inform thee, not I."

"Where is Wolfram?" cried out Walburg, "I have daily looked out for him, but the Raven house is abandoned."

"Every thing is quiet about there," answered Gertrude. "The men-servants and maidens have withdrawn."

"Who feeds his cattle?" asked Walburg quickly.

"Perhaps Wolfram still dwells there secretly. If thou wishest seriously to see the servant of the vanished man," she continued in a low tone, "I can help thee to it."

"Bring him here," begged Walburg, full of anguish.

"He will scarcely venture himself into the court, because the Count's horsemen linger about the gate. As thou now canst go into the open, come with me in front of the gate, but do not betray me, if I help thee; for what do the Priests understand about two caring for one another? they would be prudent not to concern themselves at all about it," and she swung her large cream spoon, without any respect, against the school, in which Gottfried taught.

As the maidens stepped in front of the gate,

they saw a crowd of people such as always collected themselves when the Bishop was expected back from a journey. Near the horsemen stood poor and sick people, who desired alms and healing, and Christians from the surrounding country, who sought for a blessing or good advice. But on one side stood some warriors in foreign Slave dress. With horror Walburg perceived the caps and the horse gear of the Sorbes, among them Weissbart from the retinue of Ratz, grandly attired in a long cloth coat with shining sword belt. The old man approached the women with a deep obeisance, and began twisting his fur cap in his hand: "I perceive that the journey of the women over the Sorbe stream was quite successful." Walburg controlled her repugnance as she answered: "Your journey also to the great Frank Sovereign has prospered in peace as far as I see."

"The safe conduct of thy lord, the Bishop, was powerful, we have returned hitherto in safety. But much of mine was burnt when you left us, and the old man has need of help."

"We saw the red glow on our journey, when we turned to look back."

"Straw burns as easily as shingles," replied the old man kindly, looking over the wooden

roofs of the house. "But my country people build quickly: the next time that thou comest to us thou wilt find new straw roofs."

"Never more do I desire to behold your village!" exclaimed Walburg, with honest disgust.

"May all happen to thee as thou desirest," answered Weissbart humbly; "it would also be agreeable to me, if the maiden would help the little father to his right. Hero Ingram, who escaped from our band, had, while he was yet free, with good intentions promised me a piece of red cloth, in order that I might permit him to speak to thee. I did permit it; and now I desire to have the cloth. Since that, evil has befallen the man even here, but I do not like that his promise to me should remain unfulfilled. If the maiden could help me to my rights it would be agreeable to me."

"If Ingram is indebted to thee on my account, I will take care that thou shalt receive thy due, if he cannot do it himself," answered Walburg, escaping from the eloquent thanks of the Sorbe.

The maidens went to a projection of the forest, which stretched near to the separation of the roads. There Gertrude desired her companion to sit down; she herself spread a white cloth on the edge of the thicket, and wandered along as if she

were seeking for herbs in the wood, and then slowly returned to her companion. "If he is in the house, he will come; wait, in case he should see the sign."

The maidens, who were concealed from the view of their house, did not sit long before Wolfram stepped out of the Raven house into the wood, and turned towards them, behind the trees. Walburg hastened towards him. "Where is Ingram?"

"He is no longer called Ingram, people now name him the Wolf's companion; they have outlawed him as a wild beast of the forest."

Walburg wrung her hands. "I am glad that thou thinkest of him, for in the house from whence thou comest, they are not well disposed towards him. On his account the old men sat under the three linden trees round the Count's chair. I stood by their enclosure, and it was a bitter day to me. The Count's head man entered the circle and raised the accusation; loudly did they call out the name of my master, turning towards the house, arable land, and meadows. He himself answered nothing, but Bruno as his nearest friend, entered into the circle for him. Three times he answered the accusations, and three times the country council consulted. After

the third consultation the sentence was given : as my lord had broken the peace of the Frank ruler, and the people, by raising his sword hand, he was henceforth to have only peace like the wolf, where no eye should see him and no ear hear him. And with the wolves does the outlaw now dwell."

Walburg cried aloud, but Wolfram continued sorrowfully : "They say that the sentence was quite mild, for they have not burnt his house—Bruno has meanwhile laid his hand upon it—and they have not taken away his honour ; so it is possible that the wild beasts may choose him for their king."

"Where does he dwell himself?" cried Walburg.

Wolfram looked at her significantly : "Perhaps in the wild forest, perhaps under a hard rock, he has vanished from the light of the sun."

Walburg made a vehement sign to her companion to withdraw, and said in a low tone : "I hope he is riding without a name in the Frank army."

"I hope not," replied Wolfram.

"Thou concealest him in his house?"

"His roof no longer protects him from foreign spies."

"Then confess to me where he is, Wolfram. I

conjure thee by thy soul and happiness!" she exclaimed solemnly.

"I wish for good to my soul, and happiness," replied Wolfram, "but I know not whether they would prosper if I were to betray my master. Yet I acknowledge that I alone cannot help him. If thou wilt promise me to keep secret what I tell thee, thou shalt learn what I myself know." Walburg made the sign of the cross, and reached out her hand to him. "Under the ancient stems in the wild forest, my master and I know of a hollow tree, in which we have been in the habit of concealing hunting implements, and whatever else was necessary for forest travelling, as is the custom of hunters. Hither I carried him, the morning after he had disappeared, his hunting accoutrements, weapons, and clothes; and sang in the neighbourhood as loud as I could, my hunting cry, which he knows. When I came again the second day, the tree was emptied; since that I frequently call forth my song there, and when his judgment was announced, I tarried in the neighbourhood till he came. But joyless was our meeting, his cheeks were pale, and his words were few; and when I offered to accompany him, he refused it shortly, and said: 'I dwell in the halls of the Gods, for one who walks in the

sunlight there is no room. Do not return again, Wolfram, for without peace will every one be who attaches himself to the outcast.' "

"Did he mention my name?" interposed Walburg.

"He did not even ask after his horses," replied Wolfram. The maiden bent her head sorrowfully. "It was only about the Sorbes, that he said anything to me, by which I know that he is quite distracted. He requires a red cloth for Weissbart, and I am to take one of his horses to market to obtain it. It is a debt he has promised."

"Hast thou obeyed his command?" asked Walburg.

"I have made the exchange of the cloth, but it appears to me quite foolish and inconsiderate to grant the gift to the old thief, for his spear comrades have treated my master faithlessly, and he lives in deadly feud with them."

"Nevertheless do thou obey his command, for my sake also," begged Walburg.

"The hounds encamp now in the village like Chieftains," replied Wolfram, "I saw the old man; he lurks about as a spy, and his arrival portends no good. May this be the last game that he carries home in his sack.—Since that day I have seen my master no more, yet what I still con-

ceal in the tree is almost always fetched. But yesterday I found a piece of bark in the hollow, and a picture of a horse scratched on the inner side. To-morrow I think of taking to him his best horse, and besides, one for another, that he may not ride alone."

"And what are his intentions? tell me that, Wolfram, if thou knowest."

"Where should he go except against the Sorbes. For it is the withes which lie most at his heart. As a wild wolf he will bite there, till he is struck by the stroke of a club. I would rather go elsewhere, but a foreboding drives me, as I also am called Wolf-raven. I perceive that my name indicates to me that I should accompany him on the Wolf-leap."

"Do not take the horses to the forest, on which he is to ride with thee to death," said Walburg solemnly, "for I will help him to live, if I can. Promise to await me to-morrow at this place before thou wanderest to the tree, that I may bring to thee what may be useful to thy lord."

Wolfram considered. "I know that thou art well disposed towards him, and thou wilt never betray him to his enemies."

"Never!" exclaimed Walburg.

"Well, then, I will expect thee here early to-morrow morning, when the sun rises over the border of the forest."

The maidens hastened to the house, for on the village road a troop of horsemen was approaching, the Bishop in the middle of them. He was received by an acclamation from the waiting crowd and the house companions. He trod like a Chieftain through the people into the hall, which had been erected for him, and he received there in succession the envoys and petitioners. At last Herr Gerold himself sprang from his war horse into the court. The Bishop met him on the threshold, offered him the peace greeting, and conducted him to the hearth seat.

"I have frightened away the Raven from up there," began the Count; "thou art revenged on him."

"I do not thank thee for it, Gerold; thou knowest how I have entreated for him."

"It was not for my advantage," replied the Frank, displeased, "to crush the best sword in Thuringia. I only demanded the judgment, because thy safety has been laid on my soul, by my lord. For thou couldst not continue among the people, if the first man who raised his sword against thy head remained unpunished. Thou

wouldst be despised by every one, and heathen knives would penetrate to thee on all sides. If thou wilt further proclaim thy message to the Thuringians thou must show them that thy enemies will be destroyed."

"If thou hast destroyed that man," said Winfried, "because he recklessly broke the peace of the people, I cannot oppose thee. But if thou didst desire revenge for me, thou hast caused me sorrow. Thou knowest the holy command which is written,—that we must do good to our enemies."

"Though it is written, yet see whether the men here will believe thee!" exclaimed Gerold discontentedly. "But I hope that thou art not come to take away the courage of these people, but to strengthen it; for here patience and a lamb-like feeling are of no use, but war and sharp fighting; for that I am sent into this country, and I perceive that the will of the exalted Hero Karl is, that thou shouldst help me in it. When we departed together out of the presence of the Frank ruler, we placed our hands in one another's, and promised to be true comrades among the people of Thuringia, I for my lord, thou for the Christian God; for this frontier country is gone to ruin, and firm leaders are necessary for it."

"Faithfully hast thou hitherto fulfilled our

contract," replied Winfried heartily; "and willingly do I bear testimony that I am thankful to thee above all other men, if I succeed in bowing hard necks to the baptismal font. For the fear of thy armed men is my only earthly protection; and believe me, no day passes on which prayers are not put up for thy welfare in the house of my faithful people."

Herr Gerold bowed his head a little. "It is quite welcome to me, that thou shouldst prepare a good chamber for me in heaven, for I have little aptitude for it myself. But it would be not less agreeable to me if thou wouldst keep thy faith to me in other ways also; and that I tell thee plainly. It did not please me that thou didst obtain a safe conduct for the envoys of Ratiz to the Hero Karl, and that thou didst send a shorn envoy over the border into the Wend country; for thus thou actest against my advantage, and also against thine own."

"Consider also," replied Winfried quietly, "that I have done nothing without thy knowledge. My office is to proclaim the peace of God on man's earth; how then could I refuse to announce the peaceful wish of Ratiz to the Hero Karl? We discovered that the robber was in hostility with many of his own people, and that it would

be welcome to the great Frank ruler himself to spread his dominion over the Selaves on the frontier."

"If it was welcome to him," replied Gerold angrily, "it was hateful and insufferable to me and others who command on the frontier. Dost thou think that we, as border Counts, could suffer Ratiz near us to our damage in land and in tithes? And now I tell you I rejoice that I and my advocates have stood in his way with Prince Karl. The Sorbes return without a favourable answer, and Ratiz is commanded to move back over the Saale."

"And if he does not do it?" asked Winfried.

"Then he will be the first whom we will attack, that fear may restrain the Slave people."

"But if his country people help him?"

"That is just what I wish," cried Gerold. "Dost thou think I have a mind to carry my sword idly in my scabbard this summer?"

"And so murder and fire and the horrors of border war will rise again," cried Winfried sorrowfully; "I see destroyed houses, slain men, and defenceless women and children driven like cattle, and the hearts of the victors made more savage."

"I have hitherto found thee wise in worldly

things also," replied Gerold, "but this speech appears to me foolish. Whether the Thuringians will be subdued to thy teaching, now depends not alone on the prayers which thou promisest them, but upon the blows which I and my army distribute to the Wends. For the heathen will only bend their necks to thee, when they gain victory under the Christian banner. And if thou shouldst ever wish to convert the Eastern people, these also will only hear thy words, when they perceive that their Gods no longer give them victory."

"It is my work to proclaim to the people of the earth the peace of God's kingdom," answered Winfried; "thine office is to overthrow the enemies of the Frank ruler. For many years I have learnt, that the holy teaching does not suddenly change the minds and thoughts of men, and many generations may pass before Christians themselves may comprehend the words of love and mercy. I know also that only a people who withstand the heathen victoriously, keep the Christian faith, therefore I wish the rule of the Franks to spread, so far as I can succeed in gaining followers for my heavenly Lord. I have made the agreement with the high Prince Karl, that he shall be the only earthly lord over all converted heathen lands, as

the Bishop of Rome is the only envoy of the Lord of heaven. So far I wish thee victory, and I must pray to the Almighty, that He may preserve for Himself thy hero strength. But when thou desirest war from a craving for war, renown, and booty, then take care that thou dost not meet with punishment, when thou leavest this short life for the eternal one."

"My care about the kingdom of Heaven I have placed in thy hands, Bishop," replied the Count with secret fear, "and I trust that thou wilt look after my advantage there, as I will fight for thine here, although thou sometimes withstandest me. And so let us again be good companions. I ride to the frontier, and thy intercessions may soon be useful to me."

He stepped clattering out of the door, and Winfried remaining behind said to himself quietly, "I shall find greater pleasure with my little wards." He turned into the working house, greeted the women and children, stepped with Walburg through all the rooms, received an account of all that had been done in his absence, examined the work of the looms, and the treasures of the store chamber; he touched smiling the maiden's veil which covered one half of her face, "I must praise the skill of the doctor, for he has

well healed thy wound, and time will repair the injury. Soon some one will come and desire thee for their housewife. But we shall lose thee unwillingly, for thy mind is firm, and whatever thy hand touches succeeds. Thou art half veiled, perhaps God will give thee grace to dedicate thy whole life to His service."

Then Walburg coloured, but she looked openheartedly into the Bishop's face as she answered, "The thought has often come across me to remain here for my life, as I sat with my wound; for happy is the peace in thy neighbourhood, and I have experienced much sorrow; but, my father, without a vow I am bound to the fate of another. Do not be angry when I name to thee the man who wickedly raised his iron against thy head."

The brow of the Bishop became clouded,—was it anger against Ingram, or displeasure because some one withstood his wishes?—the next moment he again looked kindly on the woman, who folded her hands beseechingly. "They have outlawed him, Walburg, because he himself had transgressed the law."

"Therefore I will go to him, reverend father."

"Thou, maiden?" asked Winfried, astonished, "into the wilderness,—into a foreign land,—to a despised man?"

"Wherever he breathes, however he lives, in the wild forest, under the rock with beasts of prey and robber companions, I will go to him; for, my lord, I owe it to him."

"Thou dost owe it to thy Father in Heaven to do nothing which is contrary to His commands. Modesty and decorum are commanded to women, and foolhardy self-abandonment is wrong in His sight."

"I understand thy teaching, reverend father," replied Walburg humbly. "I have hitherto borne myself with modesty and pride towards woovers and also towards him. But he wagered his freedom and his life for me. Wicked was the wager, I know it, my father, and too severely have I said it to himself, of which I now repent me. He has come into danger and misery on my account; I will go to save him."

"Canst thou do that, maiden?"

"The dear God will be gracious to me," answered Walburg.

"Dost thou know," inquired Winfried searchingly, "whether he will desire thy presence? Dost thou build upon the desire that he once had to possess thee? Walburg, my poor child, thou hast spoilt the face which he thought so charming."

Walburg looked down before her, and her lips quivered with sorrow. "By day and night I have thought of it, and I fear much that my face is disagreeable to him. But my dead father was his guest friend, and he will accept the daughter as a good acquaintance, if he should henceforth desire no other wife."

"Where does the Godless one conceal himself?"

"Above, in the mountain forest; his servant, Wolfram, will lead me to him."

"And if I forbid thee to expose thy life and soul in the wilderness, what wouldst thou then do?"

Walburg sank down on her knees before him; wringing her hands and raising them up to him, she answered softly: "I must go, nevertheless, reverend father."

"Walburg!" exclaimed the Bishop, threateningly, his eyes sparkling with anger.

Walburg rose quickly. "What urged thee, my lord, when thou camest hither among the heathen? Thou ventarest thy holy head daily to the hatred and wickedness of thine enemies. Without anxiety, and with a joyful heart, thou ridest through the villages of the heathen, and never askest whether an arrow out of the thicket may hit thee. Such great confidence thou hast

in the gracious protection of thy God; and thou art angry with the maiden, because she also ventures her life to the dangers of the wilderness. Great is thy office, reverend father; thou wilt bring many thousands from destruction to salvation. I am only a poor woman, I have only one life about which I pray and weep, but I have courage like thine, and a will like thine, and as long as I can move freely on my feet I will direct my steps to where his restless head is concealed. For I know that evil spirits hover around him, and oppress his soul, and therefore I must hasten to save him."

"As a sworn servant of the kingdom of Heaven I travel over the heather and through the forest," replied Winfried earnestly, "I venture and suffer much in my office; but thou, if thou wilt associate thyself with an unholy one, followest the passion which on earth binds the woman to the man. It is not my office to praise or to condemn thy actions. If I were in truth thy father, and had to choose thy husband, I would prevent or accompany thee myself. As thy spiritual adviser, I tell thee, I cannot blame thy object, but I cannot praise thy wild expedition." He turned from her, but as he saw the maiden standing motionless with bent head, he

approached her again and took her hand kindly. "Thus I have to speak to thee as Bishop, but if thou still venturdest to defy the evil spirit which rules him, I will not on that account think ill of thee; I will also during the expedition pray to the Lord on thy behalf, trusting that He will graciously hear me, and if thou returnest to me, as thou hast gone, I will receive thee again as my child."

Walburg bowed her head, and the Bishop prayed over her.

Winfried returned to his chamber, and spoke reflectingly to himself: "My companion, Gerold, is the most upright that I know among the Franks; the maiden also, who is willing to devote her life for a wild fellow, may perhaps be one of the best in this country; and yet neither of them are true inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven. It is fearful to think how small is the number of those, who consider life on the garden of earth only as a preparation for the halls of glory. Come, my son," he cried out to Gottfried, as he was entering, "I struggle with heavy thoughts and thy approach is a refreshment to me. Yet I see with anxiety that thy face is pale, and thy mein careworn; what others practise too little thou doest with over measure. I do not approve

of thy refraining from food, nor of thy nightly watches, nor of the scourging, the strokes of which on thy back, I hear through the wall. Do not rack thy soul about dreams, nor terrify thyself lest fluttering thoughts should spoil the pure garment of thy soul. The Lord has destined thee to be a working helper at hard work, and I desire to have thee strong, for there is much to do. War is impending on the frontier, it has arisen out of our seed of peace; and we have to take care that the young community may not be destroyed by the unholy. Thy travelling companion, Ingram, has been condemned, and we wish therefore to consider how we can prepare for the return of the outlawed one to his home, for he belongs to the children of our domain. Pray also henceforth for Walburg the maiden. She has wilfully separated from us, and goes to the outlaw in the wilderness."

Gottfried was silent, but a shudder passed over him, and he supported himself against the wall. The Bishop looked alarmed at the broken-down figure. "Gottfried, my son!" he exclaimed, "what is the matter with thee?"

The monk then went softly to the chest, in which the holy garments lay, took the stole out, and gave it to the Bishop with an imploring look.

Winfried seated himself in the chair, the monk knelt at his side, and folded his hands over the knees of the Bishop; the words which he spoke were almost inaudible, but they sounded in the ear of the strong man like a battle cry, and when the youth had ended, and lay with his head on the knees of the Bishop, the latter sat bending over him, holding his hot brow, and as full of sorrow as himself.

VII.

UNDER THE SHADE.

ON the following morning Walburg walked with her guide to the forest. Gertrude called out sorrowfully after her in the field : " Bend thyself down, foliage, and bend thyself down, grass ; for the free maiden has separated herself from the light of the sun ! "

In the cleared thicket above the village, herds of cattle were feeding. The cows ran curiously out of the underwood, staring at the maiden ; the herdsman also stepped on to the path, offered her a greeting, and asked her whither she was wandering in the early dawn. " To the mountains," answered Walburg softly, and the man shook his head. An inquisitive calf trotted behind her and smelt at her basket. " Away from me, little brown one," said she admonishingly, " for the path which I go would be dangerous to thee. Thou art at peace with

people : all must take notice of thee, though thou art only a yearling ; and if a stranger should injure thee, he must atone heavily for it to thy master. But he whom I seek is poorer than thou, for every one may cool their hot spirits on him unpunished, and he wanders defenceless without law." She clasped the basket in her hand firmer, and hastened after the guide.

On the summit of the hill she turned round and stretched out her hand with a greeting to the sunny plain ; she looked over the treasures of the arable fields, on the grey roofs of the village, and on the steward's house, in which she had found a refuge ; she thought of the children : who would distribute to them their morning bread ? and she saw her brothers sitting with hot cheeks by their wooden tables in the school, and the little Bezzo who would run crying and seeking for her through the house. " If he cries he will disturb the school, and I fear they will punish him, because he weeps about me." Before her eyes also appeared the serious face of Winfried, as if he said to her : " Thou followest an earthly love and hast set thy treasure on this world, but I on yonder." Then she sighed : " Whether he was at heart angry with me is what I would like to know. But he has blessed

me," she said to herself consolingly. "Perhaps he is just now praying to the Lord of Heaven for me, as he promised, and under his prayer I go securely on: for I think he must be very dear to the great God, and to please him the messengers of heaven will protect me. Yet on my own account they would hardly fly over me, because the outlawed one raised his hand so grievously against the Bishop."

She went a full hour's journey beside the rushing stream, till she came to where the last boundary signs were cut on the border trees, and the track of the wood waggons ceased. There the wilderness began, which was only trod by the hunter, by a timid wanderer, or by the lawless robber passing over the mountains, and who strayed homeless over the earth. Before her rose the wild forest—primeval stems, with long twisting creepers hanging down, shining silver grey, like gigantic pillars supporting, high above, a leafy roof. Thick shadows covered the ground, a green covering of moss lay over the twisted roots, and fallen stems and large fern fans spread themselves in the twilight. Wolfram took off his cap, as becomes a hunter when he enters among the wild trees, and Walburg bowed a respectful greeting to the high forest: "Ye

powers who grow freely up to the heavens, ye feel sunshine and rain on your heads, and the spring from the rock wets your feet. Grant me the favour, to bestow upon us strangers, when we approach you in fear, the forest fruit as food, white moss as a bed, your branches as a covering, and your stems as a fortress against the enemy." Once more she turned back into the light, then she stepped on cheerfully into the shade.

For a whole hour Wolfram guided her betwixt the stems, over mountain and valley. At last he stopped on a height before a gigantic beech, and said with suppressed voice: "This is the tree." He cautiously bent the fern back, raised a piece of beech bark which covered the hollow, and pointed within. Then he spied all round from the border of the height. Nothing was to be seen. "It is not yet the time at which he comes, but thou mayst be sure that he will not remain away to-day, for he is hoping for his horse."

The heart of the maiden beat as she saw around her one gigantic pillar behind another, till the farthest seemed to shut her closely in like a monstrous wall. "We must part, Wolfram; go back to the house and leave me here, that I may meet him alone."

"How can I leave a defenceless woman in

the wild forest?" replied Wolfram, with displeasure.

"Go, nevertheless, thou faithful one: what I have to say to him must rest with us alone, and no other should hear it. If thou wilt be friendly to me, return again to-morrow about mid-day, and ask the tree how it goes with me. I wish it, Wolfram, and thou wilt vex me if thou doest otherwise."

Wolfram stretched out his hand to her "Farewell, Walburg; I do not go far, but I know that the other will not long delay." He walked back till the maiden could no longer see him, then he threw himself on the ground. "I will wait till I perceive his form, that no one may come near her, who knows the forest customs."

Walburg sat alone under the tree. She put her hands together and looked upwards on high, where she could no longer see the blue sky, only branches and leaves. A deep silence reigned under the grey stems, and the cry of a bird seldom sounded from above. Then something moved softly down the nearest tree: a squirrel placed itself opposite to her on the branch, bent its little head down, occasionally looking at her with its round eyes, whilst it was holding and nibbling an acorn. Walburg also greeted the

forest animal, and spoke approvingly : "Thy tufty and proud tail suits thee well ; be friendly to me, red-hair, for I intend no evil to thee, and could I help thee with acorns and beech-mast in thy household, I would do so willingly. Yet thou art richer than I, for thou passest thine existence high in the tree halls, but we children of men walk with difficulty over the roots. I am anxious about one whom thou canst easily spy when thou ramblest through the tops of the trees ; if thou seest him on thy way, run before him and lead him to me." The squirrel nodded its head, threw the fruit on the ground, and hastened up the stem.

"He is doing according to my will," said Walburg, laughing. Then she perceived a rapid step, she heard her name called, and saw the outlaw, who sprang towards her among the stems, threw himself down by her on the moss, and seized her hand. "Dost thou indeed come?" he cried out, and in the joyful excitement his voice failed him. "I see thee once more ! I have secretly hoped, and daily wandered over the moss as if spell-bound to the tree." Walburg stroked his cheeks and hair lovingly. "So pale thy countenance, thy hair so disordered, and thy body so thin, thou poor shadow, who avoidest the light of the sun ! The forest has been hostile to thee, for thy

appearance is worn, and thine eyes stare wildly on the child of thy guest friend."

"It is pitiless in the forest, and fearful is solitude for the outcast: the roots of the trees hurt his feet, the branches tear his hair, and the crows on high discuss discordantly with each other whether he may become food for them." He rose up. "I know not yet whether I should rejoice in seeing thee; thou comest from the Priests, and thou goest back to them, in order to announce to them the good news that thou hast found me in misery and sorrow."

"I was with the Priests, and I come to thee," answered Walburg solemnly; "I have left the house of the Christians in order to take care of thee, if I may; I have abandoned men, and have chosen the wild forest, if thou wilt have me."

"Walburg!" cried the outlaw, throwing himself again down on the ground by her, he embraced her, pressed his head against her bosom, and sobbed like a child.

Walburg held his head, kissed him on his hair, and spoke comforting words to him like a mother: "Be calm, thou wild one; if thy fate is hard, thou hast one who will help thee to bear it. I also have grown up near the wilderness, and near the robbers of the boundary; patient courage is sure

to save the opprest. Seat thyself there opposite to me, Ingram, and let us talk discreetly, as formerly, when we spoke to one another by my father's hearth."

Ingram seated himself obediently, but he held her hand firm.

"Do not press my hand so familiarly," admonished Walburg, "for I have hard things to say to thee, what a maiden's lips do not willingly speak." But Ingram interrupted her: "Before thou speakest, hear also my intention." He picked a bit of gravel out of the moss, and threw it behind him. "Thus I do with what divides us, and do thou forget, Walburg, what has vexed thee and me; do not think of the Sorbe fetters, nor of the ransom by the stranger; and, I pray thee, do not disturb me by austere talk, for I feel myself so happy, now that I behold thee before me, and perceive thy faithfulness, that I care little for banishment and peace. Thou art very dear to my heart, and this day when thou comest to me, I cannot think of anything but thee, and of rejoicing myself in thee."

The veil which covered the half face of the maiden moved. "See first, Ingram, whom it is thou lovest: we praise the wooer who has first beheld what he will woo." She threw the veil

back. A red scar crossed her left cheek, one half of the face was unlike the other. "That is not the Walburg whose cheeks thou didst once stroke." He saw the face before him which had frightened him when he raised his sword against the Bishop. She looked searchingly at him, and when she saw his astonishment, she veiled the cheek again, and turned away to conceal her tears.

Ingram drew nearer to her and touched the other cheek lightly. "Let me kiss this," he said true-heartedly. "I am shocked, for the scar on thy face is strange ; but I know that thou hast it because I was a fool ; and no man or woman will respect thee less on account of it."

"Thou speakest honourably, Ingram, but I fear that my appearance will sometime become painful to thee, when thou comparest me with others. I am proud, and if I become thy wife, I will have thee to myself for life and death, that is my right. I will also tell thee what is in my heart. When I still looked like other maidens I had hoped for thee as a husband, and if thou didst not become that, I would hardly have had any other man on earth, even though they might desire it. But lately I have heard a voice, which spoke to me as from my inmost soul, that I should vow myself

to another Lord, the God of Heaven, who Himself bore the mark of wounds. They placed a half veil over me. Whether I should at some future time entirely veil my head or not, has been a source of anxiety to me, in bitter hours of anguish."

Ingram sprang up. "Much evil do I wish the Priests, for they have turned thy thoughts from me."

"That they have not done," replied Walburg eagerly, "thou dost not know those whom thou revilest. Seat thyself again and listen quietly, for between us there should be confidence. If thou stoodest happy before me, I should perhaps conceal my heart, even though thou shouldst woo me through my nearest relations; the wooing would be so wearisome to thee, on account of the scar, that I could with difficulty trust thy constancy. But now I see that a friend is necessary to thee, and that thy life is in great danger; the anguish about thee becomes overpowering, and I have come to thee, that thou mayest not become savage among beasts of prey, and, if I can help, thou shalt not die in the forest. For I know, and thou knowest also, that I belong to thee in trouble." She took her veil off: "Thou shalt see me henceforth as I am, I will not conceal my face from thee."

Again Ingram threw himself down by her side and embraced her. "Do not care about my preservation nor about my happiness, as I care little for either, if thou dost not tell me what I wish to hear,—that thou comest to me because thou dost love me."

"I will betroth myself to thee," said Walburg softly, "if thou wilt do the same to me."

Exultingly he raised her up: "Come where the bright sun shines, that we may speak the holy words." But when he looked at her eyes, which rested with love and tenderness on his face, he changed his demeanour, bitter anxiety fell on his heart, and he turned away. "Truly," he exclaimed, "I am worthy to dwell with wolves, if I allow the daughter of my guest friend to undergo the horrors of the wilderness! I have forgotten who I am: now I see around me the grey wood and the wild herbs, and I hear over me the cry of the eagle. I have been ill advised in my own life, but I am not a mean man, and I must not abuse the faithfulness of a woman, to her own destruction. Go, Walburg, it was only a joyful dream!" He leant against a tree and groaned.

Walburg held his arm fast.

"I stand safe by thy side, and I trust to the mighty protection of Him whom we call Father,

and also to the spear and sword of my Hero, on which I take firm hold."

"I was a warrior, now I am a worthless shadow. It is hard, Walburg, to avoid fire and smoke, and still harder to fear every wanderer, and to shun the range of his eyes, or to be expecting a fight without enmity and anger, only because the other strikes at the outlaw as at a mad dog. But it is harder than bodily need and murder in the forest darkness, to conceal the head like a coward, and to live without fame, as the vermin under the trees. Insupportable is such lingering, and the only help will be a speedy end in a sword fight. Go, Walburg; and if thou wishest to show me thy love, tell him who once was my man to bring to me a bridled horse, that I may seek my last revenge." He threw himself on the ground, and concealed his face in the moss.

Walburg felt deep anguish for the prostrate man, but she forced herself to speak courageously. Sitting by him, she smoothed his tangled locks. "But thou actest as if there were none in the land who cared for thy weal. There are many who have been outlawed and recovered their position when the anger against them has passed away. It grieves many that the sentence was

passed against thee. Herr Winfried himself has implored the Count for thee."

"Do not tell me that as comfort," broke forth Ingram angrily, "such petitions are quite repugnant to me, and every good deed of the Priest is hateful. From the first day that I saw him he has wished to direct and dispose of me as a servant; he desires cunningly to use thee and me for his purposes. When I received my sentence I thought better of him than before, even though I hated him, for I thought he had the feeling of a man to be revenged on his enemies. His compassion is the most unbearable of all to me, for I wish to be hateful to him."

Walburg sighed. "How canst thou blame him? He practises only what his faith commands, to do good to his enemies."

"Perhaps thou also comest to me, Christian maiden, in order to do good according to thy faith,—and inwardly despisest me!"

Walburg struck him gently on the head. "Thy head is hard, and thy thoughts are unjust." And she kissed him again on the brow. "Not only the Bishop is well disposed to thee, but the new Frank Count has lamented about thee to Bruno; he has extolled thy sword, and unwillingly loses thee on his next sword journey against the

Selaves. For observe, thou Hero of Thuringia, they say that this very autumn after the harvest, an army is ordered against the Wends."

Ingram started up. "Ha! that is good news, Walburg, even though they have excluded me, unfortunate one!"

"Hear still more," continued Walburg: "The great Frank Prince, as they say, goes himself into the field against the Saxons, and everywhere the heroes are arming themselves for a new strife."

"Thou makest me mad: dost thou think I could survive being separated from my sword companions, when they are gaining honour?"

"I am thinking, therefore, that thou shalt fight in their ranks, and it is for that I am here."

Ingram looked astonished at her, but a ray of hope fell upon his soul, and he asked: "How canst thou help me in this?"

"I do not yet know," answered Walburg, with spirit, "but I hope good things for thee. I go to the Count, and if he cannot do it, then to the Frank Prince himself, in the foreign country, and I shall petition our own country people. From court to court I will wander and beg, and perhaps they will be favourable to me because they now need thy sword."

"Thou faithful maiden!" exclaimed Ingram, transported.

"And yet thou wilt prevent me from helping thee, thou foolish man," gently admonished Walburg, "for thou refusest to accept my vow. How can the maiden speak for thee before the stranger, if she is not betrothed to thee?"

Ingram raised his hand, and exclaimed, "If I should live, and if I should ever again wander with a light heart over the open plain, then I will try if I can thank thee according to thy wishes."

"Now thou speakest as I like to hear thee," said Walburg joyfully, "and I will talk over with thee as with my future husband everything, that we may find better fortune for ourselves. Thou shalt keep me here with thee in the forest, or wherever else it may be, so long as I am a comfort to thee, and when thou thinkest right, thou shalt send me into the country, that I may, as thy future wife, concern myself about thy affairs. The people will believe me, when I tell them that I come as thy bride. It will be well for the Raven house when a woman has the ordering of it. Thy maid-servants have run away, and they need not come again, for I intend to remain alone mistress in the house." Ingram nodded assent. "The cattle also require care, as I

observe, and I will hire a maid for thee; this I will settle with Bruno, who is a discreet man. I will take his advice also as to how we are to procure peace for thee. Thou canst not gain it without a heavy penalty, if thou succeedest in getting it; the penalty thou must pay, even if it costs thee a portion of thy land, either near thy house, or on the inheritance of thy dear mother, in the valley." Ingram sighed. "It was a severe sentence which they pronounced against thee, that thou shouldst have peace where no one sees and hears thee. But they may interpret the hard words mildly. The Christians also will not watch nor hear thee, till thou art again visible and in repute among the people, even though thou shouldst at once dwell in the Raven house, or in the empty house of my dear father, to which I would willingly return. These are my thoughts,—and now tell me thine."

"My thought," exclaimed Ingram, "is, that I shall have a good wife, when fate permits me to dwell in the light, and a housekeeper who will set all to rights more sensibly than her Host."

"Then I applaud thee, Ingram," continued Walburg victoriously. "How we shall come out of our difficulties the dear God alone knows; but I trust Him and thank Him that I have found

thee in the forest, and have discerned how thy heart is disposed." She bowed her head and said the "Pater Noster;" Ingram sat still by her side and listened to the prayer she was murmuring. Afterwards, when she was sitting by him with folded hands and a smile on her lips, he touched her arm gently and begged: "Come, Walburg, let me lead thee out of the shade into the sun." The maiden, turning to him, said: "Does the scar make me very ugly?"

"I no longer observe it," replied Ingram honestly.

Walburg sighed. "Perhaps thou art accustomed to it. But thou, my Hero, must still wait a little. The sun must not see thee as thou art now, for he shines unwillingly through holes in the dress, and on the bare head; and also the tangled hair is not becoming to a bridegroom. First, take off the jacket, that I may sew it for thee, and meanwhile seek the spring that thou mayest adorn thy head as is fitting. She opened her basket and industriously took out needle and thread. "I have brought everything with me which a man could not find under the trees, and which every one needs who wishes to please others. Here is thy bridegroom's shirt, if thou wilt wear it for my sake; I made it in sorrow as

I was sitting in my illness. For thou no longer livest for thyself alone ; thou hast also to take care of me, and, above all, thou hast to think how thou canst always please me." She drove him away, and assiduously mended the tears in the brown woollen dress.

As he returned again to her from below, she broke off the last thread, and helped him to put on the jacket and to clean it from the moss. "Thus thou pleasest me, for thou art quite changed under the trees. And now, Ingram, I am ready to follow thee wherever it may be." She put up her little working materials ; and when he wished to raise the basket for her, she prevented it. "That does not become a warrior ; thou shouldst only carry me, if my strength abandons me. Give me thy hand that I may support myself with it."

They walked silently together over the mossy ground, up to a head of rock, that rose amongst the trees. The stem which had once stood upon it had fallen, and waving grasses, sweet-briar, and bluebells bloomed on this spot in the sunlight. Then she pressed his arm and endeavoured to conceal her emotion with a smile : "Stop, Ingram, and receive the last I have to say. Thy betrothed I will become from this hour ; but the

daughter of thy guest-friend will first become thy wife in the circle of her relations, when her uncle asks her the marriage question. For we must think of what is proper, even when we are alone. Till then a polished knife lies betwixt us, which thou once gavest me." She searched in her dress and drew out the blade, which she had used against herself in the hall of Ratiz. "Think of the knife, Ingram, when thou dost not see my cheek."

"Evil is the knife," cried out Ingram, annoyed.

"It is a good warning," exclaimed Walburg, and seized his hand beseechingly. "It shall remind thee that thou mayest all thy life long honour thy wife."

Ingram sighed, but immediately afterwards he spoke with head erect: "Thou thinkest as becomes my wife."

Both entered into the light, and spoke before heaven's sun their names, and the words by which they betrothed themselves to each other for life and death. When Ingram wished, according to custom, to bind a token on the woman, and looked back to break off a twig to wind round her arm, she said in a low tone: "I have concealed in thy pocket the firm band which will bind thee to me." He laid hold of the hard

girdle leather of the knife, which he had handed to her when in peril of death. And when he embraced her after the betrothal, she felt how his powerful body trembled with excitement; and saw that the sun shone upon a pale and sorrowful face. She long held him fast, and her lips moved. But immediately afterwards she began cheerfully: "Now sit down, Hero, that I may prepare the betrothal meal for thee, for it is the privilege of the betrothed, and she will not allow it to be taken away from her. If other guests fail to-day, we will invite the little forest birds, if these up above are ready to sing us something friendly." She pressed the food upon him which she had brought with her, and put the good bits before him, as with an invalid. During the repast she related to him calmly the account of her Sorbe journey, and of the industry at the steward's house; and also of the garland of the wild Gertrude, till he smiled upon her again cheerfully.

The sun descended from its mid-day height, and Ingram looked towards the sky. "I perceive that my lord is thinking of departure," said Walburg. "Lead thy forest bride wherever thou wilt; assuredly thou, as a renowned hunter, hast a tree hut, which I will make grand for thee."

"The dwelling of the wild beast after which thou askest is among the rocks," answered Ingram seriously. "I found it accidentally, and, except me, there is only one living who knows it. It is far from here, and unwillingly would I lead thee there; yet it is well for thee to know the refuge."

"Come," exclaimed Walburg, "it makes me uneasy to see thine eyes wandering about so unquietly when I am speaking to thee."

Again they went on under the shady roof, along an untrodden path, out of the leafy forest among the pines, over hill and valley, through earth fissures and running brooks. Once Ingram stopped, threw himself on the ground, and pulled Walburg after him. "Near to us runs a border path over the mountains," he whispered. Immediately afterwards Walburg heard men's voices, and saw at some distance two armed men riding across. When the clatter of hoofs and voices died away, Ingram rose; he was pale as a dying man, and a cold sweat lay upon his brow. "They were horsemen of the Count," he said hoarsely. She passed her handkerchief over his brow: "Only have patience, the day will come when these will bow before thee greeting;" but she felt deep in her heart the bitter shame of the

outlaw. They went on silently; Ingram often stopped, listened, and looked anxiously about him; at last they moved downwards through thick underwood, amidst which towered only single high stems. As Walburg toiled on foot down a steep declivity, thickly enclosed with bushes, Ingram stopped: "Here is the place; do not fear, Walburg, and trust me." She nodded to him: he bent the branches asunder, and rolled a stone slab aside; before him yawned a dark opening. "The path is narrow which leads to the deep ground below; here is henceforth thy dwelling, 'Wolf's bride.'" Walburg stepped back shuddering, and made the sign of the Cross. "When thou art accustomed to it, then thou wilt laugh as I do," said Ingram consolingly; but he himself did not laugh. "I will go before and hold thee by the hand; bend thy head that the rock may not hurt thee." He pressed in, and she followed. Into the dark night at their feet they went for a certain distance downwards, she feeling with foot and hand.

"Fearful is the way to the hall of the dead," sighed she; but he drew her on. "Now stand firm, that I may light thee." He let go her hand; she stood on uneven ground; by her side the rock had receded, and with terror she felt around her

in the empty darkness. Then a spark glimmered, the light went up and laid hold of a heap of branches; by the red flames she saw around her a vaulted cave; the sharp points of the rock glittered like silver and red gold. Before her the ground descended obliquely to a black expanse of water, which covered the background of the cave. The smoke whirled upwards, till it disappeared in the grey twilight, round the shining rock, on which, through a cleft in the vault, a pale glimmer of daylight fell. Amidst the glittering stone, the black water, and the glowing flame, Walburg sank down on her knees and closed her eyes with folded hands. ‘Fear not, Walburg!’ said Ingram consolingly; “if the stone is cold and the water deep, yet the rock building is a good protection.”

“Here is the dwelling of the heathen Gods,” murmured Walburg, trembling; “in such caves, people say, they slumber in the winter storms. And now perhaps they tarry here in order to conceal themselves from the Christian God, and it would be wicked for thee and me to penetrate into their night.”

Ingram looked unquietly about him, but he shook his head. “If they dwell here I have not yet found them, although I trembled quite like thee, when I first penetrated here. And again at other

hours and in black darkness I have lain here by the flaming fire, and I have called to them in a wild spirit by all the names of the holy Gods to help me. But, Walburg," he whispered, "none heard me. The holy Goddess of men, Frija, belongs, I believe, to the stone halls, for the wise people say she graciously rules in the mountains, and sometimes takes up mortal men to herself. And when I was cast away and despairing, I imagined that she had granted me the favour of her cave, and although my hair stood on end, yet I called her, I prayed, and cried out, and vowed myself to her service; but she did not come. The flames glowed as now, only something whirled in the black water, and I perceived a large water-serpent, which was moving about. I beheld in it the Goddess, threw myself on the ground, and heard the rustling of the serpent, just as now,"—he pointed to the water, and Walburg gave a yelling cry, for a large serpent turned itself in the stream, and raised its head over the border of the water on to the upper surface.

"Fly, Ingram!" implored Walburg. "I know, and it is written in the holy book, that such a creature intends all evil to men."

"It brings treasures, they say," replied Ingram in a low tone; "but I have not discovered any

gold here yet. Once the serpent came out and rolled itself on to the warm embers; then I thought certainly that it was the ruler of the cave. But, maiden, I no longer believe that it is. For I saw once a mouse moving along the water, and the reptile quickly hastened out and swallowed the mouse, and then lay on the bank with swollen body."

"Dost thou know who the mouse was?" asked Walburg in terror. "Many devilish creatures wander in the bodies of mice."

But Ingram replied, shaking his head: "I think it was a forest mouse, like many others; since that I have not feared the serpent. If it has much power, yet it is not a bad creature, for we dwell peaceably near one another. And that I may confide all to thee, Walburg," he continued dejectedly, "I no longer believe that the Gods of men care greatly about me. I was not successful with Hilla, the wise woman, when I ventured into her hut—"

"Unhappy one!" cried out Walburg, "hast thou gone to the sorceress, whom they call a witch? She sacrifices to the night-spirits, and every one becomes wicked who has to do with her."

"That you Christians say; yet I do not deny

that her existence is sad, and her work devilish. She required, for the night work that she wished to begin for me, a living child."

"But thou didst withstand?" cried out Walburg.

"I thought on thee," replied Ingram, hesitating, "and that I had gone to the Sorbes, in order to deliver children. And I did not go again to her; since that I live like one whom the super-terrestrials no longer protect, for they also esteem little the outlaw. I only confide in one high ruler," he continued mysteriously,—“the Weird Sister who floats with her Sisters on the water, and I think it would be better for me if I were to pray in the valley over which she rules.”

"Dost thou speak of the water-nymph by Idisbach?" asked Walburg shyly.

Ingram nodded. "She has been gracious to my race since ancient times, and there is a tradition of how she became gracious to us. If thou wilt hear it, then learn it now, for this is the hour in which I can confide to thee my secret." He threw a new bundle of wood into the flame, which blazed up crackling; drew the frightened Walburg near him on a mossy seat, and began solemnly: "Ingo is the name of the ancestor from whom I descend, a Hero of Thuringia. He was in love with the daughter of his Chieftain,

who had betrothed her to another. And when the Hero had felled his enemy on the battle meadow, they made him an outcast, and he wandered as a travelling Hero. Once he rode along by the water, they say it was the Idisbach; there he saw a wild otter fighting with a swan. He slew the otter, and as, afterwards, he was sitting under the ash-tree on the height, the ruler of the stream rose out of the swan-skin; she sang over him fortune-bringing Runic characters, and endowed him with a charm which would give him victory and invisibility against his enemies; with this charm the Hero penetrated by night into the house of the Chieftain, and carried away the maiden whom he loved. He erected his house by the stream of the Goddess; there he dwelt in great power, and none of his enemies could conquer him. But once the little son of the Hero fetched the charm out of the chest, hung it about him, and wandered into the forest. Then the enemies of my ancestor became powerful and burnt him and his companions with the house. Only the boy escaped. From him I descend."

"Dost thou know, Ingram, whether in truth the gift brought happiness?" asked Walburg.

"How canst thou doubt?" cried Ingram,

vexed; "it is the secret knowledge of my race, and I myself preserve the charm, the inheritance of my ancestors."

"Dost thou bear about thee what descends from fiends?" cried out Walburg, full of anguish. "Let me see it, that I may know, for this also is my right."

"Thou standest under the Cross," replied Ingram anxiously, "and I know not whether thou wouldst be favourable to the charm, and it to thee. Yet I will not conceal it from thee now." He tore open his dress and showed a little pocket of worn-out skin, which hung round his neck. "This token is as genuine and holy as anything on the earth; see here thou mayest still perceive that it is in truth made of otter skin. My father wore it sometimes, and my mother delivered it to me. When I rode after the children I did not conceal it in my dress, and therefore I fear the Sorbe became my master. After my return home I bound it round me."

"And on the same evening thou didst break the peace," Walburg reminded him.

"I broke it," replied Ingram gloomily; "perhaps the charm does not preserve the peace, for my ancestor was also an outcast when he received it."

Walburg discovered with secret horror that the man whom she loved was under the influence of unholy powers. The flames blazed and threw red sparks about, the jagged rock shone and glittered, and in the depth below the devilish reptile whirled about.

"Who is warming here so boldly his limbs?" exclaimed a wild voice from the entrance; "the smoke smells over the whole mountain."

Out of the cleft of the rock a gigantic figure, in a dark skin dress, stepped heavily; his face was sprinkled with blood, and blood trickled from his arms as the monster approached the fire. Walburg rose up terrified.

"I see two. Art thou mad, Wolf companion, that thou bringest a woman with thee under the earth?"

"Thou hast chosen a bad time to penetrate here, Bubbo," retorted Ingram crossly; "and it goes ill with thee, when thou thyself needest the help of another; for I see that thou hast escaped from a hard struggle."

"I slew the bear; then the she-bear attacked me, and we rolled together from the rock. My good fortune was, that she lay beneath me and bore the shock for me. I trailed myself with difficulty here, where I hoped to find thee," replied Bubbo, seating himself heavily on the moss.

"Do thou look where his wound is, that I may bandage it for him," said Walburg, to whom the danger of the other had given back courage, and she took out the helpful basket.

"Art thou Walburg?" murmured Bubbo. "The bone of the arm is broken; my body full of gashes; put bark splints to the arm, and speak thy blessing, if thou canst, for I fear my brown ones will rejoice over this fall."

Whilst Ingram drew some water and hastened from the cave to fetch the bark of a tree and some moss, Walburg prepared the bandage. "Never should I have thought that my veil would be bound round thy wound, Bubbo," she said kindly.

"It is not the first time that thou hast bandaged me," replied the forest man as politely as he could. "And if any one was to share our secret it is satisfactory to me that it is thou, although I consider it very incautious of thee to have come from the steward's house among these cold rocks."

When Ingram returned, Walburg, with his help, put the splints to Bubbo's arm.

"If thou couldst hand me a drink I should like it," begged the forest man; "the water underneath there is pure and cold." The maiden

feared to descend; she took a flask out of the basket and filled a small wooden cup. "This is a drink that Herr Winfried taught us; it is healing for sharp pain. It will first soothe thee, and then make thee drowsy; that is the best for thee."

"I would praise the drink of thy Bishop; but from its scantiness it disappears on its way downwards," sighed Bubbo, giving back the cup. "Yet I do not deny that it is better to get a drink from his store than a curse."

"Thou knowest him?" exclaimed Walburg. A long grumble was the answer. "How should I not know him, as he himself has reported well of me. For last month, when he was riding over the mountains with the horsemen of the Count to the Frank villages, the spearmen held up their cross as they passed by my house; but he said: 'Here we will stop.'" Bubbo laughed aloud. "The horsemen opened their eyes, and spoke in a low tone to him; but he replied: 'Here dwells my guest-friend.' They knocked long at the door," he continued, loquaciously, "although I stood in the inside. When I at last opened it, the Bishop said to me: 'We do not wish to incommode you by our stay; I only beg for a drink of water, and that thou shouldst tell me whether I can be useful to thee.' Then, as we sat alone by the hearth,

I reminded him of an old promise, that he would show me somewhat of his skill. And he said: 'I am ever ready; what dost thou desire?' I said: 'Gold; I wish to find or gain it.' He answered:

Well, I will show thee how.' And he fetched out of his leather bag a parchment in a wooden case, which they call a book, and opened it. I was more astonished than I ever was in my life, for the Runic characters which were on the white leather were of gold. They shone in my eyes, so that I was frightened; then he said: 'Thou doest well to take off thy cap, for the words which are written are holy; and here is the announcement which is given for thee.' He showed me the place and explained it: 'There was once a man, so poor, sickly and despised, that no one would have converse with him; yet he was the man whom the messengers of the super-terrestrial carried up to the heavenly city, and placed him on a seat of honour; but the rich and distinguished man who walked in purple they pushed down into the darkness of the realm of night.' And the Bishop said: 'Now mark, there is a good chamber prepared in the Christian heaven for the poor, the persecuted, and the outcast, though they may be homeless people and bear-leaders, if they repent of their sins.

More difficult will be the path of the rich to the heavenly hall than that of the poor. Therefore, when it prospers ill with thee and thy bears, think of a better life and come to me, in order that this happiness may be prepared for thee above, which is here announced to thee.' Immediately afterwards he rode off; but I sat by my hearth and observed that he had not advised me ill. For I, also, desire after this life a better fortune than I have here in the winter storm, with my long-haired companions. And it occurred to me how I once, in the kingdom of the Franks, had seen more than one hermit who prayed in solitude by his cross, for the favour of the Lord of heaven. If the Christian God would apportion a seat of honour to the ill-fated forest man, I would gladly serve Him as He desires. And this cave in which I now lie mauled might become my dwelling."

Ingram laughed aloud. "Wilt thou, Bubbo, pray amongst the Christians?"

"Perhaps I shall do it," replied the forest man defiantly. "If the Christian teaching is so mild towards the poor and the serfs, then let all who carry their heads high be on their guard henceforth, for all poor people must join the Bishop, and they are more in number than the rich."

"But thou knowest how to carry a sword," cried Ingram.

"I have killed with that weapon men and animals, when necessity drove me to it," replied the giant gloomily; "what good have I had from it? That people look shyly upon me, that I dwell alone in the snow and winter storm, and that no God and no man cares for me. He who for thirty summers and winters has howled in the forest desert with the beasts of prey no longer cares about the men-Gods of the heathen. I have heard greybeards chatter, and travelling minstrels sing, much about the halls of the Gods, to which heroes ascend, but I have never heard that any one there would give a friendly greeting to the bear-catcher. Thou hast scarcely been one summer a companion of wolves, and hast learnt to pray at the sacrificial stone, and to hope for good. But I have sometimes lurked near the cleft in the rock, from which the owl flies when it screeches out its woo-hoo, that the men in the valley may conceal their heads, and expect the blustering army of the Gods, and I have struck off the head of the screamer, and cut off his talons, without being hindered by his Gods. And I tell you, I seldom hear the Gods, and do not at all trust to their good-will. Tho

powers of the forest are merciless, and always hostile to men; those who travel in the storm, and soar round the tops of the trees, dispense only suffering and hardship; whatever I have enjoyed of good I have painfully gained myself."

A crash interrupted his speech, so powerful that the rock trembled. Ingram and Walburg started up; Bubbo listened, and then he laughed: "A tree has fallen down; the worm and mouldering decay have eaten into the wood. Do you think that it is a warning of the men-Gods? Many of them fall down where no one hears them." And he continued: "I fear the bears when I am without weapon; I fear the poisonous serpent; I fear the spiteful polecats when they run over my limbs and make me powerless; and I fear sometimes the bite of the cold, and the lightning from the clouds. For the rest I know that the super-terrestrials only rage amongst one another in grim fight. Therefore I think that there lies a secret in the golden characters of the Bishop which may help me out of this forest desert. And in a short time I will know it for a certainty."

"Go to him, Bubbo," exclaimed Walburg, "that thou mayest once more hear his teaching."

"That is just what I will not do," replied

Bubbo cunningly; "it might bring evil upon me now." I know a better trial. If the Christian God is strong enough to defend His Chieftain himself from danger, He may some time or another do good for me. Therefore my fate shall depend on the fate of the Bishop. Just at this time, I think, his enemies are going against him. If they strangle him, then the Christian God is not stronger than the others, and I continue to hunt my brown ones, till once more I lose the use of my arm, as to-day. But if my guest-friend overpowers his enemies, then I will be a servant of his God."

The maiden's heart was wrung with anguish, and she endeavoured to say calmly: "Wonderful is thy hope: how can danger threaten Herr Winfried? the land is at peace, and the Count's horsemen surround him."

Bubbo laughed gloomily. "As you wolf's children are in the same case as I, you may hear it; perhaps Ratiz is coming against him."

Ingram started up. "How canst thou know that?"

"The leaves of the field have told me, and the crows have brought it to me," replied Bubbo. "I was with Ratiz shortly after thy departure; he was going about like a mad cat amongst the

burnt huts. And at first I had so bad a reception that I was anxious to be on my way back. But he quickly changed his mien, and offered me Frank money if I would allow a horseman to creep secretly into my hut, and would go myself to the Werra in order to receive a message from his envoys, as soon as these returned from the Frank King. For they could only go slowly under safe conduct through the land of Thuringia, and would everywhere be delayed. I did according to his will; took the man with me into my house, and rode westwards to the Werra, to wait for the envoys. These, with troubled mien, gave me a token for the man, and pressed me to ride home. When I gave the token to the man, he sprang at once upon his horse, and rushed off, as if driven by the wind, in the direction of the Sorbe river."

"From thy house to the Sorbe village no rider can gallop in straight direction, for the country towards the east is pathless," cried out Ingram.

"He rode over the racing path, thou fool. If the high path over the mountains is holy to the Thuringians, and forbidden to your horses, why should it be so to the Sorbes? The strangers fear other Gods; and they ask little about yours when they are thinking of booty. Therefore I say that Ratiz will break into the valleys of

Thuringia before the army of the people can be led against him. If he catches the Bishop he would compel the Frank to do much. Perhaps he knows also of a house on which he would gladly be revenged for his burnt encampment. For the messenger threatened it in my hut."

Ingram felt for his weapon silently. "When did the Sorbe rider start for the camp of Ratiz?"

"This is the fourth day," replied Bubbo sleepily. "Why dost thou seize thy spear, thou fool? They have cast thee out, and if thou returnest home any one may slay thee."

Ingram did not answer, but gave a sign to Walburg to follow him. "Faithless wight!" cried out Bubbo, raising himself with difficulty, 'wilt thou abandon thy companion in need?' Walburg placed the flask and the eating provision by the bed. "Here thou mayest remain till we return," she exclaimed; "and if thou hopest for good for thy future, endeavour to pray to the Christian God, that He may forgive thee the snare which thou hast laid for the Bishop."

VIII.

UNDER THE BELL.

As the outlaw stepped from the cleft of the rock into the open air the sun had set, and dim moonlight lay over the foliage. Hastily did Ingram break through the thick underwood, and the maiden had difficulty in following him. At last they reached the border of the wood; the open country lay before them, and the night sky spread over their heads. Walburg remarked that her companion carried his head high, and that his speech sounded commanding, as became a warrior. "The wood runs eastwards along the road to the Raven-house; thither we go, for at home I shall find my enemies and revenge."

"Confide in me what thou intendest."

"To blot out the shame of the withes, I desire the blood of Ratiz," he replied gloomily. "Otherwise than as thou thinkest, Walburg, will my fate be fulfilled. Thou didst wish in thy faithful

heart to prepare for me a peaceful return home, but the invisible ones resist it. What the wounded man in the cave said would appear to a stranger as distracted speech, or as only uncertain suspicion, but I know that every word is truth; I know the Sorbe, I saw his camp burning, and I think that he has made a vow of revenge against me, as I have against him. I know," he cried out with wild demeanour, "that the Sorbes are now carrying brands in order to burn the roof of my house. When did Weissbart ride homeward from the steward's house?"

"Yesterday about mid-day."

Ingram nodded. "Then the envoys are in security on the other side of the Saale, and the Sorbe is free to do what pleases him." He walked again hastily forward, and said: "I perceive the Sorbes clearly before me." The maiden pressed close up to him. "Not here," he explained; "they rest far from us on the racing path. I see Ratiz lying, and my Raven tethered near the miscreant; I perceive the Hero Miros and all the companions of the hall. In the holy forest they encamp, near to the summit which bears the sacrificial stone of the God of thunder; for there is a good mountain spot for the traveling repast which they will need on their return,

and they have laid the food under the rock. Their fires are low, that they may not be betrayed by the light, and the oaks tower above. The Sorbe has brought with him only a portion of his people; hardly more than a hundred of the fleetest horses, for he dared not bring the whole swarm over the mountains, and he knows that only a rapid ride can avail him. He intends at morning dawn to press on along the holy road to our village, for he cannot in the dark night travel with horsemen through the foreign wilderness; and after midnight the moon also will fail him. I see all that distinctly, maiden, and I can call no one, and no one will believe my words."

"But I will speak for thee, that we may preserve others," replied Walburg.

"Art thou anxious about the priests?" asked Ingram dryly.

"Couldst thou honour me if I were not?" asked Walburg; "my brothers sleep under their roof."

They heard the barking of dogs. "There lies the house of the Chief Afulf," said Walburg, pointing to the roofs, which shone in the moonlight a few bowshots from the way.

"Truly all my endeavours have turned to

evil," cried out Ingram. "First, all my thoughts rose as if I were on horse's hoofs, my will was compact and firm; but now I go lowly on boar's feet, for love and hatred are in discord; I must consider as friends many whom I hate, and those who inflict suffering on me I warn from danger. Such a position appears to me sorrowful. If the new God walks over our fields with cloven feet, then the warriors will soon become women."

Nevertheless he walked up to the house, amidst the furious barking of dogs, knocked at the door and called out in the court three times the battle-cry of the Thuringians. The rough voice of the watchman asked from within: "Who knocks so wildly, and calls out the war-cry in the peace of the night?"

Ingram cried out in reply: "The Sorbes ride along the mountains. Awake thy lord, that he may hasten, if he wishes to preserve the Bishop."

"Say first who sings so rough a night song?" Then the maiden answered him: "It is Walburg, who was in the Bishop's house." And they hastened speedily away before the watchman could look at the night figures.

They called out the same in all the houses that lay on their way, and when they came to the

home village, Ingram in like manner warned the sleeping watchman at the doors of the huts. It was after midnight when they came up over the village; the last rays of the setting moon fell on the new buildings of the steward's house; Ingram's house lay dark in the shadow of the trees. Where the road separated from the village street Ingram stopped: "There lies the house of my fathers, and there dwell thy brothers and the Priest. Perhaps they will take thee back again, although thou hast been an outcast. Choose, Walburg."

"I have chosen thee," answered Walburg; "but do thou think of the boys."

Ingram moved his head contentedly, and turned to the steward's house. "Where is the sleeping house of the Priest?" Walburg led him in front of the new hall. "Be on thy guard," she whispered, "the horsemen of the Count lie in the court." But Ingram did not attend. He knocked at the shutter. "If the youth is here, whom they call Gottfried, let him listen."

Something moved within. "Is it thy voice, Ingram, which calls me? I hear my riding companion."

"I am called the wolf's companion," returned Ingram, "and I will not be thy riding com-

panion, but thine enemy; but thou didst offer thy hand to the withes that another might be free, therefore I bring thee a warning from him who dwells amidst the wild rocks. It is reported in the forest that Ratiz is riding over the mountains to catch the Bishop, and to exterminate you. See to it, whether thou canst save thy head, and that of others who are dear to thee, for you are near destruction."

The door opened, and Winfried stepped upon the threshold. The spear trembled in Ingram's hand, but he turned his face away as the Bishop spoke: "The warning announces what occasions anxiety, yet tells too little to save others. Didst thou or another see the approach of the Sorbes?"

"Only their approach was betrayed," returned Ingram.

"And when dost thou expect the attack?"

"Perhaps early this morning, perhaps not till the following day."

"To-day is the day of the Lord; in the early morning the faithful servants of the God of heaven will be assembled at His sanctuary; there He will graciously guard the supplicants. There is a free place provided also for the outlaw; if thou seekest peace, enter."

"I do not desire thy peace," exclaimed Ingram

over his shoulder; "the wolf and the she-wolf spring aside from thy fold." He went away with rapid steps, and immediately afterwards Winfried saw two shadows glide along the road and disappear in the direction of the Raven-house.

Ingram opened a small gate, imperceptible from without, which led through the palings of the fence of his court, and helped the maiden over the trench and fence, to the Raven-house. "Inglorious for the bride is such an entrance into the house of the betrothed; my own hounds will fall upon me;" but at the next moment the dogs sprang about him with joyful barking. "Be silent, you wild creatures; your welcome sounds too distinctly in the valley." He knocked at the stable in which was Wolfram's room.

"I understand the greeting of the hounds, and the knock of the master's hand," cried a joyful voice, and Wolfram stepped out. Under the linden stood the three in hasty consultation.

"It was for that reason that the rascally Weissbart laughed when I gave him the cloth," exclaimed the astonished Wolfram, "and it was for that he cast such friendly looks over our roofs. If all is as thou sayest, my lord, the Sorbes threaten us either to-day or on the morrow.

They are not here yet; and we must think of the defence of the house."

"The roof of the banished man is exposed to all," replied Ingram; "the spears of the country comrades will not defend it even if they could. But whatever may happen to the house, yet I think of spoiling the pleasure of those horse thieves. If they have the Raven, the remainder of the noble blood of my stalls I will never leave behind to them. The breed of mares which has been famous from the time of my ancestors shall be saved, and also the Sorbe booty which I keep by my hearth. I will saddle here what I need; and do thou race off with the spare horses and the fighting booty down the valley to the deer forest, and conceal them there in the hollow, where our hiding-place is."

Wolfram pointed to Walburg.

"Thou speakest wisely, yet the maiden knows right well about horses; I could easily show her the way to the hollow, for unwillingly would I be away from thee at this hour."

"I remain, Ingram," said Walburg, beseechingly, "where I shall be near thee."

"Then I must make the night ride," concluded Wolfram, discontentedly; "yet I know one in the cleft who will not submit. On the road I will

knock at the house of the Chieftain Albold, and invite him to the Sorbe chase.

All hands stirred themselves hastily, and after a short time Wolfram plunged down the valley with the horses. Before he departed he said to Walburg: "I fasten for thee our cream-coloured to the gate, if thou needest him; he belongs to thee, for he is descended from the breed of thy father."

Ingram took his horse by the bridle, approached the maiden, and clasped her hand. "Come out of the house into the starlight. I stand here to keep the last watch in front of the house of my ancestors, and I fear that none of the Gods and no man cares about the outcast; when spears are thrown here, I shall not know whether I am first struck by the weapon of an old fighting comrade or of the stranger. I am abandoned to the iron, and my house is abandoned to the flames; friendless, and without companions, I stand upon man's earth before my last fight. For I intend to await the Sorbes here. But do thou say, when any one later asks thee concerning me, that I did not await my last wound in an unmanly way. Only about thee do I feel bitter grief; thou hast become outcast for my sake; thou art despised as I am, and alone. My heaviest anxiety is, that thou shouldst

not fall again into the hands of the Sorbes. Therefore attend to my prayer: remain with me as long as night covers us, that I may hold a human hand; and when the grey light falls on the way, do thou ride downwards to my old companion, Bruno; he is an honourable man, and if thou carriest him my last greeting, he will for my sake take care of thee. When once I have vanished away, then will they honour thee again among the people." He held her hand fast, and the sorrowful one felt the trembling pressure.

"Thou thinkest of dying, Ingram, as one who is hopeless; but I wish thee to live, for the whole happiness of my life is in thy future. For this I came to thee in the forest, and for this I admonish thee now, though I am only a woman. I expect better things of thee than that thou shouldst tarry here with thy spear, keeping watch in the empty house. If thy country comrades have treated thee harshly, yet many live in the neighbourhood, and far below in the valley, who have thy welfare at heart. Thou art high-minded, and oughtest not to remain inactive till thou art sought by the robbers. No one knows the forest like thee, and there is no one on the spot to gain intelligence, therefore, I beg thee,

Hero, to examine for thyself whether the warning has deceived thee. If thou gainest intelligence when the enemy approach, the defenceless may shelter themselves, and the warriors more easily ward off the enemy."

"Dost thou send me from thee in the hour of danger?" asked Ingram gloomily. "Dost thou wish to fly to the Christians? They themselves are as defenceless as thou."

"Thou speakest harshly, and thy words give me pain," exclaimed Walburg. 'Tis not for myself that I care. But on thy account I think of the holy teaching; if others have done evil to thee, it becomes thee to do good to them."

"Thou sayest it," replied Ingram. "Thou who didst come to me in the wild forest shalt not ask me in vain to go back thither: farewell, Walburg! I ride away."

But Walburg held him fast. "Not yet, beloved one; now that thou wilt go, I fear that I myself am sending thee into danger. Thou must not ride if thou wilt fight, for thou must give warning that others may be saved. Here I tarry, in thy place I keep watch in the empty house, till thou returnest to me. Bethink thee of that. But if thou wilt go there to fight the Sorbes, I hold thee fast beseechingly, that thou

mayest not pass away from me in the forest." She clasped him passionately in her arms. Ingram kissed her on the head. "Be calm, maiden; the Sorbes can hardly beset me if I do not choose it, and I will return and bring the message back to thee and thy friends. Release me, beloved; for the dawn is approaching." He pressed her once more to him, sprang upon his horse, and rode off to the forest.

Walburg stood alone. She was accustomed to know that the men about whom she cared were in danger, but now she wrung her hands helplessly, in anguish for all who were dear to her. Near her was the house, dismal as the dwelling of the dead; before her a black border of wood, in which the murderers were lurking, and she herself alone under the night sky, waiting for the moment of flight. She seized the mane of the horse, in order to hold herself firm, and looked over towards the steward's house, from which she had voluntarily excluded herself. There lights were moving, men were watching and hastening to and fro, as if preparing for an attack. The gate was opened, and riders galloped rapidly downwards. She knew that they were the horsemen whom the Bishop had sent with a message into the country. And again her thoughts flew

back to the wild warrior whom she had sent out towards the revenging enemy. Thus she stood, her hands folded on the neck of the horse, and her look wandering betwixt the forest and houses, and up to the stars, whose light was paling in the first grey of the approaching day.

Then there arose in the quiet of the morning a clear sound such as had never been heard in the country before. Slowly and solemnly did the strokes resound, as from the brass shield of a God, warning, threatening and lamenting, far away through the air. The call sounded into the valleys in which men dwelt, and over the shady roof of the wild forest. The fleeing women who were driving the cattle downwards, and the warriors who were equipping themselves for a fight, stood still and looked terrified up to the sky, and on to the tops of the trees, as if the sound must awaken a counter-call. But no rolling thunder, and no howling storm-cry answered; the heaven was cloudless, and glowed joyfully in the east to greet the rising sun. The singing birds in the wood refrained from their morning cry, and fluttered on the branches; the ravens which soared about the high pines swept by, croaking a loud warning cry to their companions, and flew to the dark forest. "See how the ravens of the

old Gods fly away!" cried out the village people.

Above, over the mountain, rode an army of wild fellows along the racing path down into the forest ground, in order to carry brand and death into the valleys of Thuringia. But these also stopped in astonishment. Their Chieftain rode back to the height, his warriors thronging round him; they sought for an opening to take a survey over the country, but they could perceive nothing; only the mysterious sound trembled from the distance incessantly in their ears, as if it were an announcement that an invisible enemy threatened them with destruction. They could not distinguish from whence the resounding cry came; it seemed to rise out of the earth, and it floated out of the clouds. Was it the voice of the Christian God, which was warning His faithful servants of the lurking enemy? They whispered low to one another, and the hearts of the boldest became heavy.

But below in the country, as far as the calling voice floated in the morning air, men seized their weapons, covered themselves in their warlike attire, and hastened along all paths to the spot from whence the warning struck upon their ear. Not the Christians alone came out of their houses,

but the heathens also, to whom the outlaw and the spearmen of the Count had called out the message.

On the tower, which the Christians had built on the hall of the Bishop, the bell was swinging, and the maidens sang at the heathen house with a clear voice : "Come hither." Walburg listened with folded hands to the new sound of her faith. She thought, praying, whether the spy also, who was now riding in the forest darkness, would reverently accept the warning. As she looked up, she perceived in the morning dawn the troops of approaching countrymen; she saw over the mist which lay upon the village fields the banners of Chieftains, the bustle of horsemen, and the trains of armed country-people which were ascending to the steward's court, and to the great boarded partition-wall which surrounded the sacred space for the service of God; and she heard from out of the holy place, amidst the sounding of the bell, the morning song of the priests, the women and children of the court. Then she thought, that now her brothers were standing singing by the altar, and that she also was bound by her vows to the God of heaven, to go into the community of Christians. She looked once more back at the empty house, took

the horse by the bridle, and walked whither she was invited; she fastened the horse to one of the wooden hooks which were fixed on the outside of the boarded fence; she herself entered the sacred space, and knelt down quite behind the women. Before the altar stood Winfried, in Bishop's attire, and administered his holy office. His voice resounded powerful and victorious under the sound of the bell, which continued ever inviting the faithful and warning the enemy.

Meanwhile Ingram turned cautiously upwards through the forest night. Only along the holy way which led to the sacrificial stone, could a troop of foreign horsemen venture, when morning came, to descend into the valley. The solitary man often listened and looked impatiently at the small strip of night sky that was visible over him. When the first glimmer of day rose over the top, when the grey twilight sank upon the rough path, he also heard the distant sound of the bell, and stopped in astonishment. He had already once before heard the greeting of the Christian God among the Franks; now he felt a wild pleasure that the foreign ruler of men had wakened up his fellow-countrymen at the right time. Around him he observed only the night sounds of the forest, yet he knew that the Sorbes

were near, for his hot hatred painted indelibly before him the figure of the Sorbe Chieftain, his wild look and mocking laugh. Then, quite near to the racing path, where the steep descent from the height to the valley became more practicable, he heard the rattling of weapons and stamping of hoofs, and perceived a vanguard of the Sorbes: among the first was Ratiz, on the black horse. When Ingram saw his mortal enemy riding on the Raven, the blood rose to his head, and in wild rage, forgetting all caution, he called his horse by name, and turning round, urged the one he rode to flight. Wild sounded the war-cry of the Sorbes through the wood, when they found themselves discovered, and perceived their enemy before them, and a mad chase began amongst the trees. But Ingram, who was better acquainted with the way, came far beforehand; only the noble horse of Ratiz, remembering the old cry of his master and the neighbourhood of his stall companions, carried the Chief in a wild gallop behind Ingram, far ahead of all the Sorbe warriors. Thus did the chase go on down the valley out of the wild forest, and along the cart tracks of the cleared wood up to the forest border near the houses. Here Ingram rose in his saddle, and cried out the war-cry over the clearing.

The cry interrupted the office of the Priest; the watch placed outside repeated the cry; the men sprang out of the wooden circle, and sought their horses; the women and children thronged about the altar, before which the Bishop stood, holding the cross on high. When Ingram saw the open space before him, and heard the revenge cry of the Sorbe behind him, he turned his horse, and as Ratiz came on, threw his spear against the enemy. But the shield of the Sorbe received the weapon, and while Ingram was urging his horse round, the spear of Ratiz flew into the hip of the animal. He bounded up high, sank, and threw his rider to the ground by the boarded fence, so that he lay there helpless.

From the wooden circle sounded the cry of anguish of a woman. Gottfried knew the voice well; the same cry had already once before cut him as with a knife to the heart. The youth cast a flashing look upon Walburg, threw himself nimbly over the barricade, and hastened to the outlaw. Ratiz, who was defending himself with his club against the attack of armed country-people, stormed onwards, and swung the deadly weapon against the prostrate Ingram. Then rose Gottfried before him, with outspread arms. The club whirled and struck the head of

the monk; he sank silently to the ground near Ingram. At this moment of danger, Meginhard pulled at the rope of the bell; and over the head of the Sorbe resounded again the war-cry of the Christian God, with strong hammering strokes. The savage stared around him, and drove his horse back.

On all sides rose the war-cry; the Sorbe warriors broke forth out of the wood; the Thuringians collected round the baptismal circle, and rode against them; in confused tumult did friend and enemy drive about on the downward-sloping plain. When Ingram rose, he saw before him the bleeding head of Gottfried, and above, a pillar of smoke which rose from his house. For one moment he bent over the prostrate one, then seized the club of the Sorbe, sprang on to a spare horse, which stood on one side, fastened to a peg, and threw himself into the tumult. Amidst the coats-of-mail of the Sorbe warriors, and the grey iron coats of the Thuringians, he drove madly on, seeking the wing of the white eagle, which towered over the cap of the Chieftain. He indistinctly perceived that Miros was endeavouring to collect his warriors round the banner of the Sorbe; that Wolfram was riding, with the troop of the Chieftain

-Alhold, against Miros ; and that the Sorbes were gradually being pressed back into the forest. At last, he perceived the Chieftain surrounded by pursuers, endeavouring to escape by the turnings of his horse, and striving to reach the wood. Ingram rushed in straight course through the Thuringians up to his enemy ; whilst, by cries and movements of his hand, he directed his country people betwixt the Chieftain and the Sorbe troop. Ratiz saw the glowing eyes and the floating hair of his grim opponent before him, and in his hand the swinging club ; and he heard above him the ringing voice of the Christian God. Then he uttered a curse, and sprang into the forest ; Ingram followed him. Soon he chased alone behind the Chieftain, over roots of trees, water-courses, and blocks of stone, along the small space which led to the racing path. More than once the Sorbe tried to turn, in order to cast his curved sword upon his opponent, but nowhere did the narrow path offer a firm approach, and ever did the terrible battle-cry sound above him in the air. During the mad chase, joy pierced like lightning through the soul of Ingram, that the Raven galloped so nobly ; and he observed with astonishment that he was also again on a good horse of his own

breed, which kept pace with the Raven, although it could not come nearer to it. He uttered a sharp, hissing cry, and the Raven stopped and reared. Furiously did the Sorbe urge and flog, and the noble horse obeyed his rider, groaning; but the pursuer came on nearer. For the second time Ingram cried out, and for the second time the horse of the Sorbe reared; once more the latter succeeded in urging onwards the bleeding, foaming animal. But when for the third time the Raven reared up straight, in order to throw his rider, the Sorbe glided down, and, quick as lightning, passed his steel into the body of the horse. Loudly did Ingram cry, and was answered by a ringing laugh; and the Sorbe sprang up the steep height. The next moment the club flew, and Ratiz sank to the ground.

Ingram threw himself from his horse, and gave a second stroke to the prostrate one, who no longer required such a repetition of it. The conqueror loosed the curved sword from the side of the dead man, and tore away the eagle's feather from the crushed helmet. Then he threw himself on the ground, and embraced the neck of the dying Raven, who looked at him with faithful eyes.

When Ingram rose, he cast another wild look on his enemy, who, although slain, lay there like a lord of man's earth,—his fists clenched, his limbs drawn together as if for a spring; and he looked yet again on the dead animal, which once so nobly moved its limbs, but was now nothing but a shapeless piece of earth. Then he caught his horse, and rode slowly home. The bitter wrath which had hitherto driven him wildly about, had suddenly vanished, and he thought quite quietly of his journey to the Sorbes, as of an old tradition. Then in fancy he heard a low tone, and the words of a soft voice, "I am a warrior, only thou dost not perceive it;" and before him appeared the countenance of the youth, as he had once parted from him with the sorrowful words, "Thou poor man!" Evermore did these words sound in the soul of the horseman, and hot tears ran from his eyes; evermore did the bell of the Christian God sound from the distance, warning and lamenting. Then was revealed in these soft tones, to him who was returning from his deed of vengeance, all the secret of the new faith. As a Hero of the Christian God, the youth had sacrificed his life for one who was not his friend; and even so had the great Chieftain of Christianity made a sacrifice to death, in

order to prepare a happy life in the heavenly city for the outcasts of the earth. And Ingram heard in the song of the bell the voice of the dead man calling to him, "Come thou also." Then he spurred his horse, for he considered that God now invited him, because He had gained him by the death of His warrior. Near him sounded the war-cry of the pursuing Thuringians, but Ingram looked at the morning light which gilded the tops of the trees, and rode towards the spot from which the invitation struck clearer and clearer into his soul.

On the steps of the altar sat Winfried, the veiled head of the dead monk in his lap ; his lips only moved slightly. Around him knelt the sobbing Christian women, and behind stood, with bowed heads, the warriors who had remained behind as watchmen of the sanctuary.

Then a horseman rode up to the wooden fence, one of the women rose from the circle of kneelers, and walked to the entrance. Immediately afterwards a man entered the space, without his sword, and with the excitement of fight on his countenance. All turned their faces from him, and moved shyly out of his way, but he heeded it not ; he stepped up to the altar, and seated himself at the feet of the dead on the steps, not

far from the Bishop, so that the body of the youth lay between them. The Bishop roused himself as he saw the man sit down so near him, who was hostile to him, and for whom the youth had given himself up to death. But Ingram laid the adornment of the helmet of the Sorbe, on the dress of the dead man, and said softly, "He is revenged,—the Sorbe Ratiz lies slain;" and he looked searchingly into the face of the Bishop.

The blood of his race surged up in Herr Winfried when he heard that the murderer of his sister's son was slain; he raised his head erect, and a gloomy light flamed in his eyes; but in the next moment the holy doctrine mastered his revengeful feelings; he removed with his hand the eagle wing from the dress of the monk, lifted the veil which covered the head, and pointing to the broken forehead, said in a faint voice, "The Lord says, 'Love your enemies; do good to those who injure you.'"

Then Ingram called out aloud, "Now I perceive that thou in truth followest the command of a great God, even though it is bitter and hard to thee. I also believe in the God of this youth, who by his own will has died for me, although I was his enemy; for such love is the greatest heroism on earth."

He raised the veil from the face of the dead, and kissed him on the mouth. After that he sat quiet by him, and covered his face with his hands.

"The words of the outlaw ought not to sound where the country comrades tarry," began Afulf, in a smothered voice, who was standing behind Ingram. "Let the man who is here, conceal his head till his people give him back peace."

"Above burns the house of my fathers, Afulf; if the Thuringians choose, they can throw the wolf into the flames," retorted Ingram, bending again over the dead.

"The altar of the Lord is the refuge of the outlaw," said Winfried, looking up; "hold the cross over him, Meginhard, and lead him to thy hut."

"Leave me here," implored Ingram, "so long as his body lies amongst us. For I have at last found again my travelling companion."

IX.

THE JOURNEY HOME.

SOME weeks later, Ingram stood in the Priest's hut, on the wooden steps of the altar, which had once been erected by Gottfried. Memmo entered, laid down before him a basket, and admonished him: "Take pleasure in the repast; for the women of the steward's house have all been occupied with the basket."

"Thou takest friendly care of thy prisoner," answered Ingram, dejectedly; "but all food is bitter for the encaged one, who is deprived of freedom."

"I know many house companions who think otherwise," replied Memmo, looking at his birds. As Ingram was silent, he continued loquaciously, "I have been with Walburg in the cave, with the bear, Bubbo; he drank the whole drink of the Bishop, and overslept himself, during the attack of the heathen; the man's mind is dis-

turbed; he spoke as if thoroughly confused, and as if he would become a hermit."

Ingram nodded, but remained silent. And Memmo continued to himself, "Never have I seen so great a change as the faith has produced in this heathen; when I placed a bundle of hay under his head, he thanked me as nicely as a maiden. He has learnt the Pater Noster as few do. Perhaps he will even become a monk, then I must teach him Latin. Once his ravens could not bear the '*Kyrie*,' now I press him, himself, with '*mensa*' and '*filius*,'" and Memmo laughed over this great hope, as he sat upon his stool. Weapons rattled in front of the house, the door opened, and Count Gerold stepped upon the threshold.

"I call thee, Ingram," he said to him as he was rising up; "thou mayest again raise thy head free among the people. Under the linden-trees they have given thee back peace, if thou wilt pay compensation, either in heads of cattle or in land; and the valuation is moderate. If thou dost not know it yet, hear this also: on the riding-path behind the hill of the thunderer, thy countrymen have reached the flying bands of the robber; only a few Sorbes have escaped; this news will be comforting to thee. But I

come myself to win thee for a war companion. On horseback, Hero! In a few days we will ride over the Saale." With a short greeting he left the hut.

When Ingram stepped behind him into the open air, and raised his head under the light of the sun, he felt himself gently laid hold of. "Now thou art entirely mine," cried out Walburg, in his embrace. Then her fingers touched the leather band which he wore round his neck. She stepped fearfully back. "Ingram, thou still bearest on thee what comes from the unholy one."

"Dost thou mean the gift of my ancestors?" replied the man, startled; "how can I despise it?"

"Bethink thee, loved one; the charm has brought thee much misfortune: who knows how much it may still disturb thy mind, if thou keepest it?"

"Just as thou dost, did another warn me once," replied Ingram, "and I fear I have trusted too much to the inheritance. I will take it off, that thou mayest keep it."

"Not I, and no other," exclaimed Walburg. "Only one shall decide about it, that is, Herr Winfried himself."

“Wilt thou take me before the Bishop?” asked Ingram, disquieted.

“Observe well, Ingram,” said Walburg, in a tone of warning, “how the magic piece still keeps thee far from the Bishop.”

He loosened the strap, and offered her the pocket; she threw a cloth over it, blessed herself, and then seized it. “And now, away from here to him! Bend thy will, Ingram,” she implored, as he lingered, “for thou must sue for grace to one who is stronger than thee.” She looked at him full of compassion and tenderness, forgot for a moment the devil’s work in her hand, and kissed him; then she drew him away with her hastily.

The Bishop was sitting alone in his room when Walburg entered, drawing her loved one after her. “Dost thou come at last, Ingram?” said Winfried, looking up; “long have I expected thee, and a dear price have we both paid, before thou didst find thy way to me.”

“A charm which was bound up by the heathen Weird Sister is part of the inheritance of his ancestors, and warps the uprightness of his mind,” lamented Walburg. “Do thou deliver him from the power of the unholy one!”

"The grace of the Lord of Heaven shall free thee, Ingram, and also the fight which thou thyself shalt fight so long as thou tarriest upon earth. Where is the charm that frightens you?"

"Here lies the horrible work, under a white cloth," said Walburg, laying the bundle timidly on the wooden pile by the hearth. Winfried turned and said his prayer, then he took some of the consecrated water that stood in a basin near the door of the room, sprinkled the cloth and his table with it, and drew forth the inherited piece of the devil. On the table lay a small pocket of worn-out woolly skin, wound round with many knotted threads. Winfried opened wide the window shutters and the door, then he made the sign of the cross over his knife, cut strongly through the threads and leather, and sought the contents. Dust and dried herbs fell into his hand, and amongst them a new bundle of a red colour; he rolled it out, and stepped back. On the table lay a silk material, worked thick as felt, with a picture embroidered with gold threads, like the head of the reptile which one calls the dragon. The eyes shone with bright gold; round the open jaws stood the golden teeth, and his red tongue projected like an arrow.

"It would be difficult for human art to create such a devilish picture," exclaimed Winfried, astonished, holding the wooden cross over the dragon's head. "Throw wood on the hearth-fire, maiden; we will conceal the heathen picture in the flames of the Christian hearth, for its eyes shine, and its tongue licks as if it were alive."

The wood on the hearth crackled; the flames rose high; Winfried took cautiously the pocket, the broken herbs, and finally the dragon's head to the fire, and pushed them strongly in with the poker. A thick yellow and white smoke whirled up; it rose high to the hearth-hole of the roof, and twisted itself about the rafters. Ingram was by the door, on his knees. "It is bitter to me to separate from my ancestors," he sighed. But Walburg held her hands folded over his head, and gave a glorified look at Winfried, who was standing by the hearth, raising the cross on high, till the last whirl of the smoke floated through the roof. After that he stepped up to Ingram. "Prepare thy soul to become a true servant of the Christian God, and to win thy seat in the high castle of heaven. As a gift, which the Lord of heaven offers thee through me, receive this consecrated dress, that thou must

wear when thou approachest the baptismal stone, and vowest thyself to the eternal God."

Upon the burnt remains of the house in which once the ravens had croaked, arose a church, and from the tower the Christian bell sounded. A few hours' distance from these, near the great market of the Thuringians, stood Ingram's new house, and the hall which he had built. Soon a considerable village rose round the house, which in later generations was still called the inheritance of Ingram. Throughout the whole country people extolled his good fortune, and his wife, who had filled his house with a troop of curly blonde children; also the hospitable hall, and the training of his war-horses, the offspring of the Raven. He was celebrated as a war-hero, far to the east of the Saale; a terror in the border wars, a terror to the enemy, and a powerful supporter of the Frank Count. More than once he was sent to the Court of the great Frank ruler; where he ever found favour, and he observed that he had a quiet advocate there. When, at last, King Pepin, the son of the illustrious sovereign Karl, came himself to Thuringia, in order to lead an army against the Saxons and Wends, then Ingram rode among his retinue, and the King honoured his valiant

sword with praise and gifts. Whenever Winfried travelled from his Archbishop's seat at Mayence to Thuringia, Ingram went to the boundary of the country to greet the great Church Prince; the Archbishop baptized all his boys himself, and received every year from his wife linen of the finest texture, which was made on the looms at the house. He was always more gentle and more friendly to Ingram than to any other, and he endeavoured to show before all people how highly he esteemed the Herc. But he never crossed the threshold of the faithful ones, in order to rest there as a guest, although Frau Walburg sometimes begged him with tears to do so; but he caressed her boys, and never forgot to bring her a present when he arrived in the country.

Thirty years had passed since the first journey, which Winfried had ventured upon, into the land of Thuringia. Beside Ingram stood three sons and three daughters, in blooming youth; the eldest son, the image of his father, was already an experienced warrior and master of a separate house; the second also could manage the wildest horses, and waited impatiently for his first warlike expedition; the youngest, Gottfried, was destined by the will of his parents for the

Church; and gladly did his young child's voice sing the Latin hymns, which pious fathers, guests of his parents, had taught him. Wolfram, the steward of the household, who ruled kindly the vassals of his lord, said to his wife, Gertrude, "Very powerful is the magic which works in the new Christian name;" then he crossed himself vigorously. "Our God demands the youngest of my lord's sons for His service, and it is useless to withstand Him. In vain have I sewed wolf's hair in the boy's jacket, and stuck three raven feathers in his pillow; in vain have I taught him also to shoot with the bow, and to throw the club; the unwarlike name of Gottfried constrains him overpoweringly. I hope that he will at least become a Bishop, who rules over the others with shaven heads, and will have a seat of honour at the table."

For many years the great Archbishop had not come to Thuringia, and his faithful ones received news from Mayence, that he sometimes felt the infirmities of old age, and that they would never behold him again; then Walburg begged her husband, when next he journeyed to the King's Court, to conduct her and her sons to Mayence, that they might all once more receive the blessing of the holy one, and that young

Gottfried might be consecrated by him to the Church.

Just then, the heathen on the northern border had broken into Christendom, had destroyed thirty churches, slain the men, and carried away the women and children. Then the grey-headed old Archbishop had hastened to the frontier; he had taken with him what he could afford of the treasure of the Bishopric, in order to ransom the prisoners, and to build up the destroyed houses of God. He had been absent half a year from Mayence, to repair damages, and to strengthen the border people in faith and concord.

Now he had returned. Whilst his followers were rejoicing in his return home, Bishop Lullus, a confidential scholar, sought the chamber of the Archbishop. He gently pushed back the curtain of the door, and entered with a pious greeting. Winfried was sitting in his arm-chair. On his lap lay an unrolled letter, but he gazed fixedly through the arched window at the morning light, and only nodded with his head an answer to the greeting. Long did Lullus stand in respectful silence; he observed with dismay, that the old man spoke half aloud to himself, and at last he caught the low words: "It is time for me to prepare for my journey to the halls of my

Lord ; much do I long for the bloody wounds on my breast, which are to open to me the cloud-gates."

Terrified at this strange manner of speech, the Priest began : " What distracts the mind of my revered father, that he speaks like a world-weary man of the sword ? "

" I also am weary of the world," replied the Archbishop, " for, like a seafarer, I steer through the waves which roll endlessly ; my keel strikes on the rocks, the icy frost fetters my feet with tough bands, and the winter storm strikes my brow with hard wings. Endless is the struggle, and joyless is what I behold around me, and I heartily long for the haven in which I may lay my head down."

" Dost thou call thy life joyless, revered father, thou to whom the Lord has given victory and honour, such as has never been given to any man ? " replied the Priest. " Let the eyes of thy mind measure the countries over which thou rulest. Forty years hast thou striven as the warrior of God against the devil ; many hundred thousand souls hast thou won to the faith, and raised many hundred churches and brothers' cells in the country which thou didst enter as a wilderness. The trees of the heathen are everywhere

rooted up, their insolent necks obey one Lord, the gracious God gives them prosperity, better discipline in their houses, and obedience to the law. On the borders the murdering enemy are restrained by valiant Christian warriors; and in the land of the Hessians, Thuringians, and Bavarians, the boys learn to read the Holy Scriptures. Thou hast done as it is written: 'A sower went out to sow;' and glorious is thy harvest. Firmly grounded is the unity of true faith on man's earth through thee. As thou hast achieved such great success, wherefore dost thou sorrow, my lord?"

Winfried rose and paced through the room. "I have vowed myself to three followers of the Apostle who have governed over the Church of Rome. To thee I may boast, that I have been faithful to them; I have made them rulers in Catholic Christendom. I have bowed down for them the refractory necks of the laity and the pride and selfishness of unfaithful Bishops; I have enjoined unity in doctrine and obedience among all people, that they may find willing obedience where they rule in the name of the Lord. I have subjected the souls of men to them, but they themselves I have not been able to constrain, to be good servants of the Lord of heaven

in everything. They are not zealous to found the kingdom of the Lord in poverty and humility. They lust after landed possessions, after gold treasure, and after earthly dominion. Ill do they distribute favours, and wickedly do they show indulgence where it is useful to them; they are cleverer than we are, but greater also is their pride. I have served three Popes; now comes a fourth, a stranger, and he will, I fear, distribute his favour in new ways for his own advantage. My office is to convert the heathen. I have been sent by the Lord as an envoy to them, and by this right I stand firm against the Pontiff in Rome as against the devil. When I was young, I made my first journey for the cross, in the Lord, to the wild people of Friesland. Incessantly have I cared about the obstinate ones, and held the cross over their heads. The Bishops of the Franks lived indolently in miserable fleshly pleasures, unsound in their faith, and unlawfully dissipating their church property; and no one cared about the conversion of unbelievers. Now when, by hard labour and with anguish of heart, I have there founded a Bishopric, they wish to take Friesland from me, and to place another Archbishop there, that our work may be spoilt, and our seed drowned amidst the new pressure

of heathen waves. Thou knowest well, my true son and companion, that I desire not my own honour, but the salvation of the miserable. Humbly have I prayed to my new master, Stephen, to leave me Friesland, the eldest child of my care. I do not know what the cunning of the Romish Priest intends. But I think of relieving him of the choice. I myself will go into Friesland, whether it pleases or displeases him. I will put the question to the great Lord of Heaven, whether I am to continue any longer a servant of a servant, or whether He will vouchsafe henceforth to the weary old man, to seat himself at His feet. I mean to make my last war expedition."

On a sunny May morning, the people of the city and the country thronged to the court of the Archbishop. First on the steps of the palace stood the spiritual brothers—on one side the priests and deacons, on the other the monks of the cloister, and beside them the bearded and emaciated faces of hermits, who had left their tree-cells in order to receive the blessing of the Archbishop. Head to head stood the people, but there was a solemn stillness; all countenances were sorrowful; tears were in many eyes, as at the last death-journey of a Prince. From the

steps of the palace the boatmen were carrying the travelling utensils; four Levites carried the chest of the Bishop, with his books, and the treasure of reliquaries to the Rhine boat, the pennon of which fluttered gaily in the morning wind under the sign of the cross; and at every piece which the men conveyed to the Rhine, there passed a timid humming and sighing amongst the multitude. In the hall of the palace stood Winfried, in the circle of those whom he loved, the Bishops, his scholars, and his countrymen from the land of the Angles, who like himself had come over the sea to teach the heathen. Women also had assembled—many of them his blood-relations, most of them veiled. Winfried towered erect amidst the kneeling host. His eyes shone kindly as he stepped from one to the other, giving gentle words of teaching and of comfort. When he also greeted Walburg amongst the throng of women, she led her boy forth by the hand, and threw herself down at his feet, praying: "I bring my son, the young Gottfried, to my lord: lay thy hands on him, father, that his life may be blessed." Winfried smiled as he beheld the fine boy, and his hand touched the light hair. Then he took him, led him to a confidential friend, the Abbot Sturmi, of Fulda, and turned to the door.

All present sank down on their knees, and, blessing them, he passed to the entrance. Then his looks fell on the tall figure of Ingram, who, in his warrior's dress, knelt near the threshold. He stopped, and said solemnly, "Thee, Ingram, I invite to go with me to-day : wilt thou once more be the guide of my journey ?"

"I will, my lord," answered Ingram, rising up with sparkling eyes.

"Then take leave of thy wife and child, for thou must go with thy shield, for the Lord."

In the court below the people surged about like the waves of the sea. When the Archbishop stepped out, all fell on their knees, and raising his arms over them he went slowly towards the boat. There he turned once more, gave greetings and blessings, and smiled kindly on the children, who were raised by their weeping mothers, that they might behold the man of God. But Ingram held with one hand his wife, who walked proudly by him without tears, her eyes firmly fixed upon him, and with the other he held the hands of his three sons. And when on the bank he released himself from them, he took the oath-hand of his eldest son, laid it within that of Wolfram, and said to the latter : "Be thou true to him, as thou wast to the father."

The boatmen loosened the sail, and the vessel floated down the Rhine; along the bank the people were on their knees, looking after the passage boat till it disappeared behind a bend of the stream. It was a sunny journey, like a long festive expedition. Wherever a chapel stood on a height, or a little church below by the stream, there the people thronged and the bell sounded when the ship came and passed by. Every evening the travellers lay-to where pious Christians dwelt. Herr Winfried went on shore, greeted the congregation, and rested under the roof of any one who was intimate with him, whilst Ingram lay by the mast, under the banner of the cross, keeping ship's watch. Thus did the travellers pass down the Rhine to where it fell into the sea; they lay-to before Utrecht, and took into the vessel the Bishop of Friesland, who had replaced Winfried. Then they went eastward as far as the border of the heathen Frieslanders. There Herr Winfried had beforehand invited the newly converted people, that he might lay his hands on the baptized, and confirm them in the faith; his messengers had gone through all Friesland, and had announced his arrival. At the mouth of the little river Borne, which divided the Christian from the heathen Friesland, the travel-

lers landed, shortly before the appointed time, at a creek where the flood had heaped up a rampart of tree-stems. The Archbishop landed, chose the place of encampment, and stepped round it, consecrating the place. Ingram caused the tents to be pitched, the trenches to be filled with water, and the drift-wood to be laid in layers, as a rampart.

As he stood by the rampart measuring the ground, and himself striking the stakes down, Herr Winfried passed by him, and said, "Thou art industriously working in fencing us in with wood and earth; hast thou also taken care to ask of One His will concerning us? For He brings armed defenders, and overthrows them, according to His pleasure."

"Do not be angry, my lord, if I use my hammer till after evening prayer, for warning has come to me from people on the bank, that much whispering and wild tumult disturbs the villages of the heathen; and the number of shields is small which defends thy head."

But Winfried did not attend, but continued looking up to heaven. "Thicker stood the trees in the land of Thuringia. There thou wast the first who raised for me a night-fence on the journey. Then the ash-seed fell down on the ground, and the seed of saving doctrine sank into

thy heart. See, a new tree has grown up under the protection of God. The unholy Weird Sisters do not hover over it, but high angels, the winged messengers of God; perhaps they also may prepare for thee now, or soon, a gracious passage on high."

He blessed him, and stepped back into his tent, which rose up stately in the midst of the others. Ingram put the hammer away; he armed, and placed himself with shield and spear as night-watch by the entrance of the encampment. He cast his eyes over the wide plain: like Herr Winfried, he looked at the night glow which shone so bright from the north, as he had never yet seen it. He thought of his wife and blooming children who were now sleeping at home in peace, and whom he so heartily loved; he reflected on the whole happy life which he had led with his wife, his renowned warlike expeditions, the praise of his fighting comrades; and Wolfram also, and his Raven horses came into his mind, and he laughed, and blessed in thought all that belonged to him, and prayed for each; light was his heart, and ever did his looks return to the horizon of the heavens, where the glow slowly passed towards the east, till the brightness in the east ascended, and the little clouds had a rosy light

like a gate of the rising sun. Then he perceived how the gate would be opened through which he himself was to rise up to the Castle of the Lord of heaven, as one of His warriors ; and he knelt down and said the prayer which Walburg had taught him. As he looked up he perceived in the distance, in the mist, a dark mass, which was moving onwards ; spears and white shields glittered. He closed the entrance, called out his war-cry, and hastened to the tent of the Bishop, and to the huts of the warriors. The bell sounded from the tent ; Winfried stepped forth, the word of the Lord in his hand, and surrounded by priests. Outside the trench rose a discordant howling,—the heathen ran against the barricade, and tore up the woodwork. Ingram sprang, swinging his spear, at them, and led his comrades to the fight. But powerfully sounded the voice of Winfried : “ Hear the command of the Lord. Do not recompense evil with evil, but evil with good. Have done with war and struggle, for the day is come which we have long desired ; this day the great God of heaven rewards His faithful servants. Prepared for us is a high seat in the heavenly halls ; the hosts of holy ones conduct us before the throne of the Lord of heaven.”

Then Ingram threw his sword amidst the

invading heathens, stepped with outspread arms before Winfried, calling aloud the name of the youth who had once been his riding companion, and received his death-wound,—after him the Archbishop, and then the other priests and laity : only a few of the followers saved themselves over the water, and related the end of the pious heroes.

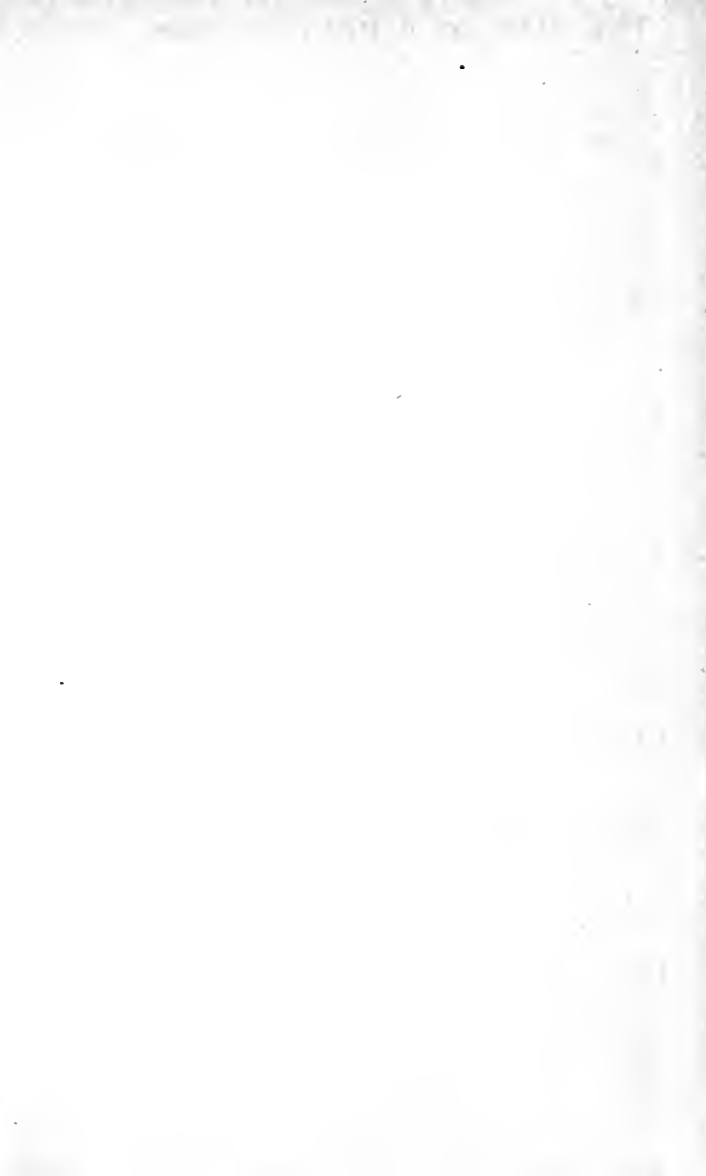
With a great retinue, the Chieftain of the Christian God rose up to the hall of his heavenly King.

The remains of Winfried were carried by pious Fathers to the Rhine; but Christian Frieslanders erected a death-mound for the Thuringian, Ingram, by the shore, and paced round the spot with prayer. It was not the ravens of the forest that flew over it, but white-winged sea-gulls; and instead of the tops of the trees, the waves of the sea roared round him, as the storm-wind has driven them one century after another. Yet from his house under the beech-trees and pines of the forest his race grew, and spread themselves joyfully. The waves and the forest roar, from one century to another, the same secret song. But men come and disappear, and their thoughts change incessantly. The longer the chain of ancestors which binds each individual to the past, the greater is his inheritance

from the olden times, and the stronger are the lights and shadows which fall on his life, from the deeds of his forefathers. But together with the pressure that the olden time lays upon the descendant, the sense of his own freedom and creative power has grown wonderfully.

THE END.





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